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NEW STATESMAN

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Two Wasted Years

Only one spar now stands salvaged from the wreck of the social contract. In giving its support to the 12-month pause between one pay rise and the next the TUC economic committee has delivered to Mr Healey not so much a breastplate as a battered wooden sword. Yet in a sense the Chancellor and the Government have been lucky to get even that: the Transport & General Workers' Union conference wanted, after all, the pay negotiations in the coming year to be free of all restraints and those unions (like Nalgo) who face waiting till next spring for their next negotiated wage rise can hardly be expected to rejoice in a system under which the calendar has become the blunt determinant of economic justice.

The Government, in fact, is now paying the price for its failure over the past two years to think at all constructively about a socialist alternative to free collective bargaining. From the moment in June 1975 that Mr Wilson pleaded before the mineworkers' conference for 'a year not for self but a year for Britain', there was always something *ersatz* about the Government's allegiance to incomes policy. To those at the receiving end it began to look increasingly like a con trick – something that their leaders got bounced into by a sudden panic over sterling or, at best, an unpalatable pill that the Chancellor tried to make the nation swallow by offering the sugar-coating of tax concessions. At no stage in the past two years was any effort made on the Government's side to persuade the unions and the public that in a planned economy there is nothing inherently absurd in the notion that income redistribution should be planned as well. What could have been a socialist policy was instead throughout put forward as an emergency – and necessarily unpopular – device.

The result is that we are now back where we were in the summer of 1975 – only with less hope in the sense that the alternative to free collective bargaining now looks thoroughly discredited. It is only fair to recognise that the unions over the past two years have demonstrated at least to the satisfaction of their own members that it was always unfair to blame them for inflation. For what, after all, has happened? Working men and women have made great sacrifices in terms of their own pay and their reward has been to see inflation back at more or less exactly the figure it was when Labour first came to office three and a half years ago. The Chancellor can hardly be surprised if he finds himself facing an uphill struggle with his 10-per-cent 'guideline' for the coming year.

Of course, locked away in the cupboard, Mr Healey does have his doomsday weapon. It is, not to put too fine a point upon it, unemployment. Even his last week's Budget statement was predicated on the assumption of no more than a 10-per-cent increase in the wage bill: cash limits, originally introduced to bring public spending under control, are now the instrument by which the Chancellor hoped to control the entire economy. Faced with the collapse of incomes policy, Mr Healey has, in fact, become the latest convert to monetarism. If earnings over the next year increase, as some expect, by as much as 17 per cent, then the Chancellor's calculation is plainly that monetary restrictions will automatically take effect to control inflation, though only at the cost of adding to the total of the unemployed. How high that total will eventually go – and for how long – before a 'natural' unemployment rate is eventually found no monetarist, however bold, has yet cared to specify.

It is, moreover, a rough and haphazard game that the unions are now being invited to join. For while cash limits can bite at employment, in the event of high settlements in the sphere of any particular spending programme, they can hardly be expected to apply their teeth in the same way to unions making across the board claims for the whole range of their memberships. In the next year Mr Healey is, in effect, challenging union leaders to learn new rules – rules that in their casual brutality could even eventually reconcile some of them to the belief that there are worse things in this world than a planned and controlled socialist incomes policy.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

Are You Getting Sick of Healey?

Do you not sometimes think: 'Oh, fish it. Here's another of Denis's Budgets, but frankly I couldn't care two pins. I'll just take a couple of Mogadons and order an alarm call for when the coast is clear'? If you do, this is nothing to be ashamed of. You're suffering from what doctors call boredom – a much commoner complaint than is generally supposed. The other day a man was presented to the Queen simply on the strength of his claim to have sat through all of Healey's Budgets without nodding off once. He attributed his health and stamina to a diet of carrot juice, yoghurt and nuts. But even he confessed (in an interview in the local paper) to have found the going tough at times. 'On one occasion,' he recalled, 'I had to prop my eyes open with matches, and on another,' he chuckled, 'I drove a drawing-pin into the palm of my hand every time I felt I was losing the thread.' He was awarded a special Jubilee medal.

For my own part, although I used to be sick of Healey, I have by now reached a new stage in which I am able to see the positive, distinguishing qualities of the man. I've grown to admire his awfulness, to see the point of his horridness, to respect his most rebarbative aspects. Like Victorian architecture, which is now admired for those very features for which it used to be despised, Healey commands a kind of respect in and out of season. One feels that, whatever happens, he will go on being Healey; and this is in some ways reassuring. Harold Wilson gave up being Harold Wilson. Roy Jenkins gave up being Roy Jenkins. Michael Foot, one feels, made a conscious decision to sacrifice Michael Foot on the altar of Labour unity. Long before his death Tony Crosland had begun to develop a new political character, as it were to revise the revisionist. But Healey remains Healey, whatever the reverses. Is there a leadership election? He will stand. Has he done very badly on the first ballot? He will remain for the second. Has he done badly on the second? Very well, he will return to the Treasury, where he will preside over a massive crisis in sterling, humiliating negotiations with the IMF, the partial recovery of sterling and, most recently, the stillbirth of Phase Three.

No figure, in the last couple of years, has been more often at the centre of political controversy. No figure has been more typical of the age. The importance of the Treasury in British politics has never been greater. Whereas in the 19th century it might have been a Lord Chancellor who set the tone of a political generation (Lord Eldon, for instance, a man so resistant to change he refused to take off his wig in bed, even though wearing it gave him headaches) or whereas a First Lord of the Admiralty or a Foreign Secretary might once have been the key figure in a cabinet, today it is without doubt the Chancellor of the Exchequer who dominates the scene. Appropriately enough, in an age in which political argument has been swamped by economics. Most political discussions nowadays resolve themselves into questions of economic feasibility, and most questions of feasibility receive the answer 'No'.

It is curious that Denis Healey's Chancellorship should also be noted for the fact that, during its course, the Budget has declined as an institution. The Budgets of previous governments were great occasions (or at least they seemed so). They were regular. They were final. They were unconditional. Healey's Budgets are frequent, they are becoming almost tentative, and they have been conditional. There is no augustness, no sense of pomp and circumstance about them. Last Friday morning's statement was not listened to in respectful silence. It was sometimes cheered, but it was also mocked by the Opposition. On such occasions, the press gallery is much more exciting to watch than the floor of the House. Upstairs is jammed, the shorthand writers dash out regularly with the latest paragraph, the evening papers are in a state of extreme excitement. Downstairs – well, it's just another mini-Budget really. The parts of it which caused most interest were written by Audrey Wise and Jeff Rooker.

As to the conditional nature of Healey's Budgets, it is worth noting here that the trade-off between taxes and wage negotiations (so hated by the Tories) is really pure philosophical Bennery. Benn believes that the distinctive socialist feature of this Government, the thing for which it will be remembered, is the way the unions have been incorporated into the process of economic planning. If the Left wring their hands at the content of Healey's Budgets, they should nevertheless admit that they are tentatively democratic in form. It would be ironical, would it not, if Healey came to be remembered for having democratised the Budget out of existence.

Benn and Healey. An odd pair. Apart from Fred Peart and Callaghan himself, they are now the two longest-serving cabinet ministers. What else do they have in common? Neither of them is the type to resign – a characteristic I admire (the Labour Party loves people to resign, but I fail to see how politicians can recommend to the voters Administrations in which they themselves are unwilling to serve). They are both keen on becoming leader. And they are both, in a way which might surprise many people, curiously isolated from the rest of the parliamentary party. Benn is the friendliest, most pleasant of politicians, but he does not do much casual cultivating of the Left, or indeed of any backbenchers. Healey is notoriously foul-mouthed. He was once interviewed by a radio reporter I know and spent the whole interview making furious V-signs across the tape-recorder. The only time I've tried to ask him a question, he – but no. Lobby rules, OK. It is *said* that he's really absolutely charming and spendid company. But that's just the sort of thing the Mitfords said about Hitler.

What does the future hold for Healey? Once, famously, it held the offer of the Foreign Office. Then came Dr David Owen, but I have never been convinced (and nor are some senior cabinet ministers convinced) that Owen is supposed to hold his job in perpetuity. It is true that during the initial period of press euphoria at the appointment it was hard to imagine Dr the Boy David being moved on. Yet I cannot believe that, if Healey seriously wanted the job, it would be denied him. Owen could retire *summa cum laude* to a department which could do with his sort of flair – Health. Healey could step in.

In a sense, he has already stepped in, with his spearheading of the opposition to Owen's peace plans for Rhodesia. On this occasion he impressed his colleagues with the forcefulness of his arguments, and one can clearly see, from his success, the present state of the power game in the cabinet. For Owen's Rhodesia plan was (irrespective of the justice of the case) a most ambitious effort. Had it come off, it would have more than made his name. The fact that it was disallowed must therefore be intensely frustrating. One wonders whether Owen, as he argued with Healey about his baby, also felt that he was arguing for his job. One wonders, too, whether Healey was not aware of the nervousness his opposition might create. In many ways, now would be the right time for Healey to leave the Treasury. The Government has managed by the most extraordinary paradox to turn their defeat over Phase Three into a triumph; but who knows what that triumph will begin to look like when the large wage claims come rolling in? After the next election, whichever way it goes, it is likely that Callaghan will feel it appropriate to stand down. The Treasury may be the most important job in the country, but it is bound to be the least popular. As a springboard for the leadership, the Foreign Office is much more handy. This is, after all, what Jim Callaghan found out last year.

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Mary Holland

Playing Footsie with the Unionists

It is, I suppose, just possible that Mr Michael Foot is not aware of the effect that the spectacle of his assiduous wooing of Mr Enoch Powell to secure the support of the Official Unionist MPs at Westminster is having back in Northern Ireland. Possible, but not very probable. After all, in between his assignations with the Unionists, Mr Foot has reportedly found time for the odd chat with Mr Gerry Fitt – who has voted with the Labour Party ever since he was elected to Westminster in 1964 – and he must have told him of the fear and anger which is beginning to grip even moderate Catholic leaders here as they are pushed inexorably to the conclusion that the Government's present, and possibly long-term, interest in Northern Ireland is now mainly concentrated in just how to fix a deal with the Loyalists which will buy those six crucial votes to keep itself in power.

If Mr Foot does not realise this, and Mr Mason chooses to ignore it, then Mr Callaghan at least must be well aware of it. Or has he forgotten that summer day in 1969 when he came like a saviour into the Bogside and, speaking from the first floor of a slum house, told the hysterically welcoming crowds that the Labour Party was on the side of justice and would not let them down? Ah well, that was a long while ago. Even the house has disappeared years since, pulled down in the orgy of slum clearance which was the outward sign of that Labour government's determination to build a just society in Northern Ireland.

Still, it might be salutary for someone, anyone, to wander around those streets now and report back to Mr Callaghan on just how widespread the apprehension is among those people that 'letting them down' is exactly what the British government is now trying to find ways to do. Lord Melchett might think about it. He seems the best-liked of the present British Ministers, if only because he has a predilection for giving away money as though it were going out of style and still seems to think that it is part of his job to get around and talk to people.

It is not only the reports of Mr Foot's deal with the Official Unionists at Westminster which has caused this apprehension (though that is crucial to the growing fears among Catholic politicians) that the Government is now actively thinking of ways to abandon the long commitment to power-sharing in favour of what Mr James Molyneaux calls some more 'realistic situation'. Among quite ordinary Catholics one finds the general suspicion, acceptance almost, that the whole motivation of British policy in Northern Ireland now is to reach some accommodation with the Protestant majority. They base this belief on their observance of the day-to-day conduct of direct rule as it affects their community, particularly since the Loyalist strike of last May.

Last weekend in Belfast a Catholic lawyer said to me: 'Ah well, at least no one has yet said that we are driving ourselves insane on purpose. Will it come to that do you think?' He was referring, half-jokingly, to a recent statement by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Kenneth Newman, warning the public not to be deceived by the recent spate of allegations that the police were mistreating prisoners arrested for questioning in connection with IRA terrorist offences. The police, he said, had evidence that prisoners were deliberately injuring themselves. Such injuries were part of a campaign by the Provisional IRA to undermine public confidence in the police.

Chief Constable Newman was unfortunate in the timing of his statement. It came just after one case and just before another in which prisoners picked up for question-

THINKS: 'Close your eyes and think of England; close your eyes and think of England; close your eyes . . .'

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ing by the RUC have had to be transferred out of police custody into mental hospitals for psychiatric treatment. One of these, a 64-year-old man whose son was later charged with involvement in the murder of three policemen, had already been held by the police for the statutory seven days and was transferred to the psychiatric unit of a large general hospital near his home when a writ of *habeas corpus* was applied for.

Of course it's true that the Provisional IRA do benefit from complaints of police maltreatment and that they are adept at exploiting this. It is no less true that concern about the treatment of arrested people, particularly young people, now extends far beyond the Provisional IRA to lawyers, doctors, and community leaders. They are not impressed by Mr Newman's claim that prisoners are injuring themselves. On the contrary, they are very angry indeed at the smear implicit in his statement that by raising the issue publicly they are playing the Provos' game; a suggestion which they say is pandering to Protestant prejudices. One solicitor to whom I spoke, this time in County Tyrone, told me that it is now quite commonplace for him to see young prisoners for the first time, to all appearances quite disorientated, having signed confessions with little or no idea of what they had put their names to.

To understand the extent of Catholic suspicion it is worth retracing what has happened since Northern Ireland dropped out of the headlines with the defeat of the Loyalist strike in May. The strike was generally agreed, in England and at the time in Ireland, to have been Roy Mason's finest hour. He showed that he could face down the Protestant bully-boys, including the old trumpeter, the Rev. Ian Paisley. The police did a grand job which must (mustn't it?) have impressed Catholics. The Protestant working class voted with their feet for sweet reason by going to work. Surely now there must be a real hope that a shift in political attitudes would follow, and the long-awaited change of heart among Protestants would manifest itself in a desire for political compromise?

Unfortunately the scenario did not appear so benign back in Northern Ireland. At least not for very long. Far from inclining to compromise and sweet reason the Protestant political leaders made it quite clear from the start that, although they disapproved of the tactics of the strike, they were in wholehearted agreement with its demands for much tougher action on security and a return to majority rule in the Province. What is more they made it abundantly clear to Mr Mason that as a price for not supporting the strike, for 'delivering the Protestant community' as one Unionist put it to me at the time, they expected him to move swiftly in their direction on both these issues.

And so it appears to have happened. On the security front the main development has been the increase in full-time recruitment by the Ulster Defence Regiment, a force which is feared by Catholics as a successor to the old B-specials, for the fairly compelling reason that its members have an unfortunate habit of committing sectarian killings and holding dual membership with the Ulster Volunteer Force. On the political front there has been Mr Mason's intimations, in his talks with local political leaders here, that the British government would not be averse to the proposals of Mr James Molyneaux, the Official Unionist leader at Westminster for what is known rather clumsily as administrative evolution. This has been rejected by most shades of Unionist leaders back in Northern Ireland from the Rev. Ian Paisley down or up. What they want is the return of a government based on Protestant majority rule which will make and pass its own laws, not administer Mr Mason's. But as Catholics see it this is a domestic difference. The point is that the debate is being conducted almost entirely in terms of what will or won't satisfy Protestants. The Catholic Social Democratic Labour Party has long ago made it adamantly clear that it will have nothing to do with any kind of administrative devolution, super-council or whatever, on the grounds that it was precisely the administration of such powers as housing by local Unionist-dominated councils in the past and the discrimination that it involved which led to the initial explosion in 1968.

Most dramatically, there has been the parliamentary pact with the Unionists at Westminster and, week by week, the reports of the terms which Mr Molyneaux and Mr Powell have been putting to the Government for abstention in this vote, or even support in that one. Catholics know that Mr Powell's main demand, for an increased number of Ulster MPs at Westminster, is already well on the way to being won. Mr Mason has already announced the setting up of a Speaker's Conference on the subject which, he hopes, will be in operation before the end of the month.

Taking all this together, the apprehensions in Catholic areas begin to look rather less like paranoia and a lot more like commonsense suspicions. Within the SDLP one now hears, quite commonly, the belief that Mr Mason is either determined to ignore the extent of their opposition, or else that he seriously underestimates it. There are dark mumblings that he has mistaken reasonableness and compromise in the past for a willingness to submit to the Government's more 'realistic' appreciation of the situation. That would be very foolish indeed. The SDLP cannot submit because it knows full well that the Catholic community as a whole will not agree to submission.

This time, after all, they have an alternative to fall back on. Every time there is a report of Mr Foot meeting with the Official Unionists at Westminster the Provisional IRA counts its blessings. Was it not ever thus? In the end it can always count on the British Government to act as its most persuasive recruiting sergeant.

Christopher Price

Inside the European Parliament

The EEC is rather like a brand new Rolls-Royce which doesn't go. The chrome sparkles, the real leather smells good, there are armies of chauffeurs to drive it, mechanics to service it and grand folk to sit in it. It remains, however, stationary. Sometimes there is the occasional splutter and jerk before it grinds to a halt once again. In all the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that there is a measure of scepticism towards the two current proposals of its makers – buying a bigger car and tripling the number of grand folk. Of the bigger car – enlargement of the Community to include Greece, Spain and Portugal – more anon. It is the more significant of the two ideas. Direct elections, however, which will involve a vastly swollen army in the European Parliament (as it calls itself) or the European Assembly (as religious anti-marketeers call it) are rather more in the news at the moment. So first a few reflections by one who was five months ago elected to the place by his British parliamentary colleagues.

The culture shock is severe. It is vast, ill-attended, deluged in paper and strictly hierarchical. It never votes with much significance – except to elect its President, currently a precise, dapper Italian demochristian called Columbo. The lack of any sort of whipping and pairing system makes all other votes comparatively meaningless; its important decisions are those about people – chairmanships, rapporteurships and who goes where on which trips – and they are taken on a Buggins's turn basis in private cabals of political group leaders and secretaries. There is an utter lack of the abrasiveness and conflict one expects from parliamentary politics. Life resolves itself into an endless time-consuming search for the most anodyne compromise available.

When the culture shock is over the temptation is to sit back and accept this alien way of going about things. The paradox is that although the political groups are more in evidence than at Westminster and endowed with princely resources, members of the European Parliament rapidly cease to behave like politicians. They become 'experts' on the minutiae of harmonisation of hazel nuts, multifibres or mcas. So although from time to time they resemble politicians and thunder against the mountains of food and the lakes of wine, in reality they increasingly accept them as part of the European scenery – which is not too difficult in Strasbourg. There in particular the cozy Euroglow suffuses and envelopes, reinforced each evening by a comfortable haze of Niersteiner and fresh asparagus.

So far the effect on me has been to confirm suspicions of machinery which does not suit Britain on the one hand and a complete lack of escape routes from it on th

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other. It is only from the inside that one can see how totally the machine is fixed to subsidise French agricultural *paysans* and impoverish British industrial ones: and there is nothing one can do to change it. It is a mechanism finely attuned to the standardisation of the system as it is, and to the exclusion of just that blend of eccentricity and common sense on which Britain (and in particular the Labour Party) has thrived so fruitfully in the past. I suppose we *could* get out of it all. But so many Rubicons have now been crossed that the idea does not seem to me any sort of practical proposition. So it is a matter of making the best we can of a bad and alien job.

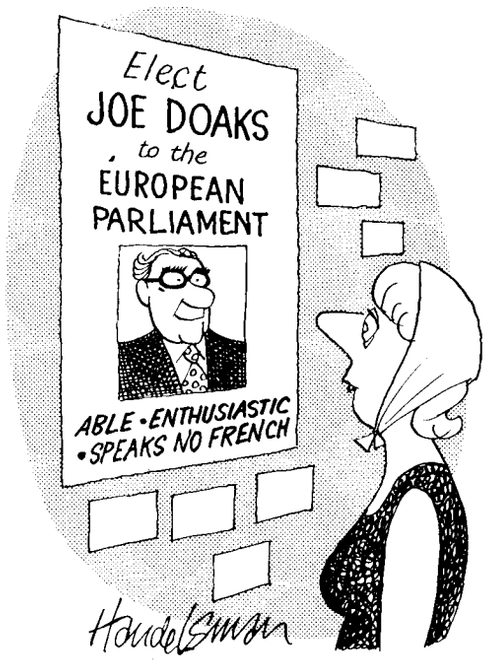
First, the bad bits. As a democratic mechanism the Parliament is expensive, inefficient, time-consuming and intractably infirm of purpose. No less than 70 per cent of the £52m. it will cost next year relates not to the substance of its work but to its linguistic and geographical momentum: every word spoken and written in the Parliament, its committees and groups has to be translated into six different languages; and since no one can agree on its permanent home it peregrinates – filing cabinets, functionaries and all – through Europe like a medieval court, mainly round the Strasbourg, Brussels, Luxembourg circuit (though its political groups roam further afield at whim). Efforts are being made to rationalise. There is a move afoot to buy a redundant bank headquarters in Brussels as a permanent seat from which the Parliament could properly supervise the Commission. It has been stymied for the moment by Gaston Thorn of Luxembourg who wants to move the mountain to Mohammet. He has the Parliament administration in Luxembourg and wants to shift the Commission there, when its lease on the Berlaymont building in Brussels runs out in a few years' time. It is heavy odds that neither move will ever be made: it is certain that whatever happens costs will continue to escalate.

Cost is then compounded by incapacity. The Parliament is constantly in classic coalition deadlock, as hung a jury as one is likely to find anywhere. It resolves the problem by a refined art of verbal compromise. A nuance changed here, a suggestion incorporated there, an objectionable epithet removed somewhere else and a wet melange emerges which can happily mean all things to all men. Particularly to the Commission and the Council of Ministers who are under no obligation to take the slightest notice anyway. Since the Parliament has no formal and continuing role in sustaining a government, a stale air of impotence hangs heavy round its every act and edict. True it can theoretically reject the budget and sack the whole Commission, but everyone knows it would never do any such thing.

Not that any of this is an argument for giving it *more* power. The Labour Party in Britain and the Gaullists and Communists in France are quite clear on this issue. They trust rather better the devil they know – their national governments on whom they feel they at least have some influence. To this extent the 'antis' can relax – at least for the first few years it will be a substantially impotent Parliament they will have the privilege of directly electing.

So far, so bad, and somewhat one-sided. Not in the sense that it is a biassed picture but rather one seen through particular English political spectacles. The good bit about the culture shock is that it is a sharp reminder that continental Europeans actually exist: that building Jerusalem in England is all very well, but it still leaves the problem of coping with foreigners; and that their methods of sorting things out through agreement rather than standard, puerile House of Commons abuse is a device with some advantages. (The chambers in Luxembourg and Strasbourg are hemicycles emphasising unity – that in Westminster, being a direct descendant of the choir stalls in St Stephen's Chapel, is tailor-made for shouting matches.)

Whether we like it or not the reality of politics today is the politics of consensus. It is increasingly the pattern all over the world. The Lib-Lab pact is only the North-South dialogue writ small. Compared with consensus, war and revolution are at their lowest discount ever, even written off by



the Eurocommunists of Spain, Italy, France and Greece. So there is something to be said for learning the ropes from the consensus-circus experts of Europe who have known war and consider anything, however hierarchical and bureaucratic, to be preferable.

Then again devolution has reminded us of the plurality of democracy. This is a reality uncomfortable for the Powells and Heffers of this world who married the Westminster Parliament in sickness and in health and do not like other spurious democracies muscling in on the scene. Though the European Parliament still lacks the democratic legitimacy of Westminster, it is less stuffy and freer of 19th-century imperialist pretensions. Both have strong elements of charade, but the Europe one somewhat less. European civil servants are younger, more approachable and more ready to talk about policy. To appreciate what a closed, secretive society Britain still is, it is only necessary to spend a few weeks in Europe.

Moreover, even if the European vehicle does not work, it is a useful meeting place and increasingly important for the world outside. Europe may have failed as an introverted dream; it has become crucial the while in the world outside. Because it has acquired a sort of Commonwealth out of its preferential arrangements with the former British and French colonies (known as the ACP – African, Caribbean and Pacific), it is already a third force in world diplomacy with a unique role to play in mediating between the two great superpowers. Though internally there is chaos, externally there is a job to do in the Third World. Particularly in Africa, Europe has already acquired a good deal more credibility and trust than either Russia or the US.

So the outlook is not as gloomy as all that: that the socialist perspectives have been transformed by the prospect of enlargement. When Britain was a candidate, the socialist vista held out was a Scandinavian one. That all went sour: Norway opted out and Schmidt's socialism is somewhere to the right of Heath. It is from the South that existing ideas now come. The prospect of a socialist Italy, Spain, France and Portugal frightens the European Christian Democrats out of their skins. It also frightens some of the Germans who see their grip on Europe weakening and many of the French and Italians who fear the consequences for their own Mediterranean peasants of subsidising even more of their ilk.

I am fervently in favour of enlargement, mainly because it will consolidate democracy in the Mediterranean and block the resurgence of fascism; but there will also be substantial economic advantages for Britain; it will force upon a reluctant EEC what we have always wanted – a complete overhaul of the Common Agricultural Policy. The threat of a fresh flood of Mediterranean wine and olive oil will succeed where renegotiation failed. A bigger community will be at once more socialist, less of a rich man's club and less of an umbrella for inefficient, expensive farmers.

It still may not happen quickly. There is much talk of 'globalisation', which is a polite way of delaying the entry of all three by examining each minuscule problem of the one by reference to the corresponding problem posed by the other two. But they will have to let them in, in the end. The rules say that if you are democratic and European, you have the right of entry; that, after all, is how Britain got in. It would hardly become us to join in with the growing obstructive tactics of our continental partners. So my own priority would be to put enlargement before direct elections. The true Europeans are appalled at this prospect: it would, they say, reduce Europe to a mere free-trade area with a bit of political cooperation thrown in. That is the attraction of the idea: it might actually reduce the price of food and the pretensions of the supra-national bureaucrats at one fell swoop. It was in pursuit of this objective, that I would have voted against direct elections a fortnight ago, had not a combination of Heathrow engineers on strike and a vibrating front wheel delayed my arrival from Luxembourg.

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Allan Ashbolt

Why Whitlam Should Go Too

Sir John Kerr's resignation from the Governor-Generalship, to take effect from next December, will remove from Australian politics its most divisive and disruptive presence. Quite obviously Prime Minister Fraser was unwilling to face another election campaign carrying such a handicap, though it is doubtful whether even the chosen vice-regal successor, Sir Zelman Cowen, an amiable academic of considerable forensic skill and social charm, with a rock-like belief in law, order, intellectual sobriety and the unassailable connection of the right to privacy with the right to property, will to any extent diminish the steadily rising Republican agitation, which is already backed by such notable citizens as the Nobel prize-winning author, Patrick White, and the historian Manning Clark. But the most interesting question raised by Kerr's imminent and universally unregretted departure is whether it will help in revivifying the fast-fading career of his great antagonist, the politician he humiliated and virtually destroyed, Edward Gough Whitlam.

'As a politician he is the most brilliant after-dinner speaker in Australia' – the remark was made recently by one of Whitlam's 'non-enemies' (the ex-PM has few friends, preferring to surround himself with loyalists, courtiers, camp-followers and idolatrous devotees, supported by a clutch of enthusiastic cultists). It was not a bitter or even contemptuous comment – it merely suggested that he had more style than substance. He is always good for a classical allusion, a literary conceit, a Chestertonian paradox, a burst of rhythmical alliteration. He has been lucky in his speechwriters, certainly; but the wit and the love of language trip naturally from his tongue, endearing him to authors, artists, musicians, actors and indeed the entire aesthetic community. This adulation may have something to do with the fact that he legislated Public Lending Right for authors, thus boosting their annual incomes and ensuring them a respected place in a rather Philistine cultural environment. His patronage of the arts, which he tried to formalise and centralise in an unwieldy bureaucratic monolith called the Australia Council, was no vote-catching pose – he has always been genuinely fond of the theatre, music, painting and architecture; while on overseas visits he could never resist veering away from political business for archaeological and anthropological excursions.

Let me here declare an interest and perhaps even a prejudice. I have known Whitlam for something like 14 years, on terms (at least in the public arena) of mutually uneasy respect. But I was never among his court favourites and had only fleeting aspirations to join the freeloaders and bandwagon-jumpers who swarmed into his first (1972-74) Administration. For him I was probably too far to the Left of the party, insufficiently discreet in my public utterances and disinclined to give him the absolute personal loyalty which he demanded. I admired his debating dexterity and organisational ingenuity, but resented the way in which he would denigrate the abilities of less educated colleagues.

My first doubts about Whitlam arose in 1966 when he declared unequivocally in a television interview that he was 'destined' to lead the Australian Labour Party. It was not the arrogance or vanity of the statement that worried me, but the very concept of 'destiny', which seemed to me quite alien to the Australian ethos. The word, however, came easily and unembarrassingly to Whitlam, who as a scholar at St Paul's College in the University of Sydney acquired much Latin, a fair smattering of Greek, elements of legal training and obsessions with the Australian constitution, together with a passion for the history and literature of imperial Rome.

'The sense of destiny comes to consciousness in the *Aeneid*,' wrote T. S. Eliot in his essay *What is a Classic?* 'Aeneas is himself, from first to last, a "man in fate", a man who is neither an adventurer nor a schemer, neither a vagabond nor a careerist, a man fulfilling his destiny, not under compulsion or arbitrary decree, and certainly from no stimulus to glory, but by surrendering his will to a higher power beyond the gods who would thwart him or direct him. He is exiled for a purpose greater than he can know but which he recognises – and he is not, in the human sense, a happy or successful man.' Eliot's description hardly fits Whitlam, or indeed anyone battling to survive in the cynical, cut-throat, machine-dominated atmosphere of Australian politics – but I suspect that Whitlam sees himself somewhat in this Virgilian mould. With typical pragmatism, however, he has translated this notion of destiny into a more acceptable Australian idiom – crash through or crash.

Time after time in the late 1960s and early 1970s he took up the challenge to his own sense of destiny, crashed through against all odds ('Whose party is it?' asked Dr Cairns in 1968, when contesting the leadership. 'His or ours?'), and eventually emerged on top, in undisputed command. By bringing dissident factions into line, he gave at least the appearance of unity and common objectives to a party of contending sects and conflicting principles. He stormed to victory in seemingly hopeless by-election campaigns. He never would have won in December 1972 if it had not been for the tacit support of the financial and mercantile establishment, especially in Melbourne, who by then were thoroughly disillusioned with the mediocricty and ineptitude of the Liberal-Country Party, who were unable to heal widening splits within the ruling class, and who came to consider that under Whitlam, a Labour government could be counted on to behave with bourgeois propriety and responsibility. Nevertheless, without the force of Whitlam's platform personality, without his histrionic exhibitionism, without the carefully projected image of a solid suburban family man, the electorate might not have swung Labour's way so noticeably. None of these crash-through achievements should be underrated or taken away from him. Nor should the liberalising social welfare reforms he introduced during his early months at the helm in Canberra.

But he has now crashed. Although he recently retained the party leadership in a ballot against his former Treasurer, Bill Hayden, the closeness of the vote (32 to 30) reflects not only dissatisfaction with his lacklustre parliamentary performance during 1976-77 but a much deeper hostility towards his policies and methods. On the whole, party branches still swear fealty to him – largely, I think, because of the infamous and grossly undemocratic manner of his dismissal. Even in the branches, however, there are now discontented rumblings and an apprehensive feeling that Labour can never again win with Whitlam. 'We want Gough' was the rotating chorus of the December 1975 election rallies, but over recent months there is evidence that Gough is not so much wanted as tolerated. Whitlam is fond of arguing that the caucus is a great leveller (though it seldom seems to have deflated his own ego). What he should now weigh is whether sentimental appeals to the past, to the inequities of the constitution, to the limitations of the parliamentary system and to the injustice foisted on him by the quasi-monarchical tyranny of the Governor-General will any longer suffice to keep him at the head of a party seeking to grapple with an entirely new set of socio-economic conditions.

Whitlam's original policies were devised in a period of economic optimism and expansion. A well-intentioned Fabian in essence, he remained simply a big public spender, determined to improve the quality of life by appropriating a reasonable (though not too aggravating or abrasive) measure of corporate profits and middle-class taxes for what he interpreted as the general good. While the Treasury funds lasted, he proved benevolent and innovative; but as the recession set in he began to blame his lapses, inadequacies and failures on to an outdated constitution, an obstructive Senate, belligerent press proprietors and the unscrupulous intrigues of the Liberal-Country Party opposition.

Now, it is undoubtedly true that these

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factors played an important part in his downfall and defeat. But the faults were as much in himself as in his stars – or even as in the American Chamber of Commerce and the CIA. For a start, he was far too prone to displays of personal extravagance – as though it was his right or duty to bask in the privileges and perquisites of office. To buy Jackson Pollock's 'Blue Poles' for the National Art Gallery at a cost of $1m. was more a defiant demonstration of his cultivated taste than a sensible piece of economic management. To buy a new Mercedes-Benz as the flagship of his car fleet, when there was already a perfectly serviceable Daimler in the garage, was merely an infantile indulgence. To remove the Queen's photograph from post offices could have been regarded as a brave affirmation of republicanism, if his own photograph had not been put up in its place (although, to be fair, this eccentricity seems to have been perpetrated by one of his cabinet cronies, Fred Daly). Altogether, his conduct was uncharacteristic of a Labour PM – it lacked any touch of humility or austerity – and though in his radical rhetoric he claimed to care for the working class, his concern seemed to concentrate on problems of sewerage and drainage.

At the Federal Conference of February 1975, I remember a four-hour lunch with him and several other members of the National Policy Committee on Arts and Media, while he tried to modify or moderate some of our more uncompromising recommendations. In one of the clauses I had inserted a few phrases referring to the necessity for a newspaper, partly financed by the Treasury but essentially independent of both government and commercial enterprise, and controlled by the workers in the organisation – meaning, of course, the journalists, printers and clerical/secretarial staff. Whitlam agreed to the proposition in general but took strong exception to the word 'controlled' especially when used in conjunction with the word 'workers'. 'Workers!' he exclaimed, more in surprise than in anger, 'What a pretentious word, an absurd word. Who are workers? What are workers? I am a worker. We all here are workers. It's time the movement rejected this sort of jargon.' Ultimately the phraseology was changed, and the newspaper was not to be controlled by its workers but 'conducted by those who produced it'. Whitlam's correction may have been for the better; but what fascinated me about the *contretemps* was that, although he works exceedingly hard, exhibiting an immense capacity for absorbing and assessing ideas, facts and figures, he has never been a worker and has no natural affinities with the working class. The son of a highly-placed public servant, he went straight from university to the Air Force, thence to the Bar and politics. For him the world revolves around the law and Parliament – he has no knowledge at all of how the real productive forces in a capitalist social formation are organised and maintained.

Even in his purely prime-ministerial role, he was erratic and unpredictable. He made a few good ambassadorial appointments, notably Bruce Grant to India and Stephen Fitzgerald to China, but for the most part he was a notoriously bad picker of people. It must never be forgotten that Sir John Kerr was his own choice – the Caligula's horse, so to speak, that eventually tossed him on to the stable dung-heap. He was continually out-foxed at senior levels of the public service trained in the Menzies tradition of Liberal capitalism – and he refused to purge the recalcitrants, partly because he naïvely hoped that he could create a happy Labour-oriented consensus, partly because of his ingrained respect for the myth of professional objectivity.

On the one hand, he ruled cabinet like an autocrat, choking off discussion of vital issues and submissions which were properly prepared in advance, allowing no deliberation on matters that he judged beyond the trust of his colleagues – for example, he treated foreign affairs as his private province. On the other hand, while he would interfere in any decision where he had a personal barrow to push, he permitted his ministers so much freedom in their own areas of activity that they tended to act independently of one another, without any central guidance.

When he realised, after the 1974 election, that private investment by overseas companies was being withdrawn at an extremely rapid rate, he was baffled. What can a public spender without much understanding of productive processes do when capital dries up, inflation bounds skywards, employment opportunities shrink, dole queues lengthen and multinational companies practise blackmailing stratagems of economic de-stabilisation? Whitlam had no answer, except to call for conventional restrictions and restraints that were in deep

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contradiction to his whole expansionary outlook.

His kind of socialism could succeed only when capitalism was succeeding. His kind of welfare programme could be implemented only when capitalist institutions were prepared to countenance it. Locked in an intellectual vacuum, he began to look desperately for ways of borrowing from overseas and soon found his entire Administration involved in the so-called loans scandal. Whether it was deliberately manipulated to discredit and destroy his Government is a question for some other occasion. How Whitlam dealt with the crisis is, however, of crucial importance, because it was at this point that the breach with Kerr began, when he forced the Governor-General to sign an Executive Council Loans Authorisation – even though Kerr, as was his right, had not been invited to attend the meeting which discussed the matter. Over the next few months of 1975, in a mood which mixed anxiety, capriciousness and self-righteousness, he cut down or sacked nearly all his most senior ministers, either for administrative errors and peccadilloes or because they could not extricate him from the nation's economic ills and dilemmas. When he confronted Kerr on 11 November 1975, he was utterly isolated from his ablest colleagues.

His encounter with Kerr knocked the psychological stuffing out of Whitlam. Although his oratory was vigorous enough during the 1975 campaign, he was a changed if not precisely broken man. He delivered his speeches as if by rote, waiting like an ancient actor for the shouts of acclamation from his claquers that would carry him on to the next sentence, the next paragraph. Fraser was a tight-lipped platitude-maker by comparison, but nobody who knew Whitlam could avoid sensing that he was finished – in other words, that he had crashed.

He has no policies for the coming period of economic contraction and hardship. He has no plans to meet the challenge of the multinationals. His so-called 'resources diplomacy', the belief that Australia could use its mineral reserves and especially its uranium deposits as a bargaining factor to establish domestic economic advantages bears no relation whatsoever to the realities of trans-national capitalist operations. His reign was an interregnum, not an era. The economic base remains unchanged by his efforts, though there is no doubt that he brought terrific animation to the whole cultural climate. He has done the state some service, more service than most politicians, inestimably more service than the Governor-General who trapped him into political impotence; but his fault (unforgiveable in a Labour man) is that he had imperial longings in him. He should now go, and he should go decently, while he can still be remembered affectionately for his accomplishments rather than resentfully for his pride.

Sydney

Patrick Wintour

Lord Ryder's Monument

In 1973 Tony Benn gathered conference around the Labour Party programme for controlling private industry and extending new forms of public ownership with the words: 'We must mean what we say and say what we mean, and not run for cover whenever Fleet Street turns upon us. If it looks tough now, it is as nothing to the kind of attack that will descend on us as we are seen to carry through this programme.' In fact, the press at first was merely contemptuous – 'A short way to lose elections', *The Times* commented. Nevertheless, it did not take two years for Benn's fears to be realised. Leaders did not mean it when they said, like Harold Wilson, 'the NEB is the biggest leap forward in economic thinking and policy since the war'; nor did Denis Healey mean it when he said 'We are all agreed on establishing a comprehensive planning control over the 100 or so largest companies in Britain'. Fleet Street did turn on Labour and caricature its ideas and their exponents – and most of them, Benn, Heffer, and Meacher were shifted or sacked. By November 1975 and the unveiling at Chequers of the new-style industrial strategy, the Government had duly run for the cover of PR men capable of selling an exercise in management consultancy as the path to the new Jerusualem. Ironically, the major part of Benn's prophecy, which remains unfulfilled, is that the party's economic programme was never seen to be carried through except in the eyes of the CBI, who grotesquely described the 1975 Industry Act as 'a charter for workers' control'.

Ever since that debilitated legislation the request has been made in document after document from trade unions and Labour Party research departments for £1,000m. a year to the NEB, and 'as a matter of urgency', to quote *The Next Three Years*, the signing of planning agreements between Government and the top 100 companies. It has almost taken the form of a sterile incantation. About once every two months Eric Varley admits at Question Time that his Department's achievement to date of the one planning agreement, made with Chrysler UK, is disappointing progress (20 planning agreements were promised for 1976 and another 80 by 1978). At the moment the Department of Industry is having talks with only seven companies. There was no mention of planning agreements at all in the Government's seven-page memorandum to the NEDC. According to the relevant civil service union, 50 jobs have been cut which were earmarked for planning, while at Transport House the research department is bitterly critical of ministers who last year publicly failed to support planning agreements.

As for the second pillar of the original policy, the NEB, its strategy is determined by the funds (£1,000m for five years) it has available, but the appointment of Lord Ryder to introduce the state holding company concept to Britain hardly helped. 'In my mind politics does not come into it at all.' The NEB has done little to inject competition into monopolised sectors of industry, to initiate new investment or counter regional unemployment. Instead, it has become a veritable farmyard for the state's lame ducks, a seed-capital provider for small firms, although existing institutions like Equity Capital Ltd and Finance Industry are both capable of doing this, and reorganise from arm's length firms or groups of firms. It all looks suspiciously like Wilson's favourite pet, the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation. There is no coherent pattern in the NEB's investments; in fact it has become capitalism's odd-job man. Its current portfolio runs from Leyland to a producer of office equipment, while its stakes range from 100 per cent in Rolls-Royce to 2.6 per cent in Dunford and Eliot. Except in name, the NEB bears little relation to the original concept of controlling a leading profitable firm in each of the major sectors of industry and commerce.

Export or Die

That is as about as near as you can get to an economic consensus that Keynesian macro-economic fine-tuning cannot revitalise Britain's shrinking industrial base. Keynesianism concentrates on demand and not supply. To the extent that the Government's sector working party approach looks at supply, such as bottlenecks during economic upturns and the rationalisation of industries likely to succeed, it is an advance, but it still fails to bring pressure to bear on the level of the company and its decision-making process, which was always the intention of the Labour Party and the TUC. An article in last Monday's *Financial Times*, the day of the latest industrial strategy session, made it abundantly clear that management does not believe in any industrial strategy if it involves companies being pressed to alter economic decisions to fit in with the declared objectives of the sector working parties. One tribute to the inconsequence of the present approach is the departure of its civil service executive, Alan Lord, to join Dunlop; another is the latest figures on CBI investments which reveals one more Improved Growth Scenario going out the window.

The assumption of sector working parties is that export-led growth and the expansion of UK sales in world markets would be necessarily in the interest of companies active in that sector of industry when, in fact, given the multinational structure of British companies in practically every SWP, it is just as likely to be at the expense of the company's plants outside the UK. The Healey strategy anachronistically presumes

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a world of competing national capital for, in fact, about one third of world trade is now trade inside multinationals as opposed to trade between companies. It has only been relatively recently that evidence has emerged on how concentrated economic power has become in this country and how multinational in character that concentration is, with all the opportunities for transfer pricing which this provides. In 1972, one half of our total exports were accounted for by 81 companies and 24 of these, each with exports of more than £50m., accounted for one third of that total. Companies operating in Britain are attuned foremost, not with a British government's 'export or die' campaign, but with their own level of international production. Only one fifth of our total exports are produced by enterprises which operate solely in the UK. Any discussion of trade flows or, specifically, our balance of payments must consider the investment policy of multinational companies which will decide the location of their subsidiaries and, hence, the trade flow. Once this is done, the jubilee buntings draped outside the major British companies come to look strangely at odds with the less patriotic hue of their company accounts.

Setting Examples

Let us look at the example our leading 25 companies have set. Between 1972/73 and 1974/5 their overseas production rose from 52 per cent of UK production to 92 per cent, while exports, as a percentage of home production, only rose from 18.2 per cent to 19.5 per cent. Let us look at how they have responded to the bracing challenge of lower tariff barriers and competition with EEC. According to the Department of Industry, between 1971 and 75 direct investment in the EEC by UK multinationals totalled £1,530m.; EEC investment in the UK was only £3.70m., an adverse ratio of five to one. Finally, if we compare ourselves with the healthiest economy in Europe, Germany, a United Nations study of the relationship between exports and production abroad shows that the UK produces over twice the value of goods abroad from UK subsidiaries as it exports from the UK. The German proportion is the exact opposite. They produce abroad half the value of goods they export.

The argument that British companies invest abroad because their assets will receive a better rate of return has only a vicious circularity since it is outdated capital equipment which leads to low productivity and a low rate of return. These ideas are hardly esoteric, but the problem for the TUC, is to bring people to think in terms of breaking out of the circle, even if it means suspending market forces. Last week, for example, I heard a Minister elaborate on what a responsible company ICI was. He made no mention of ICI's huge planned investment in Wilhelmshaven in West Germany.

The Labour Party came into majority power in 1974 committed to restoring the economic sovereignty of the Government over British companies through the push of the example of companies controlled by state holdings and the pull of planning agreements. The Tories' compaign on the issue 'Who governs Britain?' had been turned round on its industrial backers with a vengeance. Nevertheless, the intellectual parentage of these ideas was potentially social-democratic. The restoration of competitiveness and responsibility in the private sector through the NEB as an alternative to wholesale nationalisation, plus the extension of democratic accountability are both consistent with social democracy. And, indeed, Crosland found himself in 1972/3 on the Labour Party's industrial subcommittee as one of the few social democrats who opposed the concept of the state holding company. Though any mention of a specific figure, like 20 to 25 companies, in which the Government needed to take a controlling interest had been excised from the Manifesto, when Labour came to the Department of Industry the talk was still of taking over companies such as GKN and ICI. The social democrats had yet to regroup themselves. Benn published (hitherto confidential) figures showing that in four years the Tories had handed out £2m. a day to industry and a quotation from Clement Attlee, 'those who cry against state control are generally the loudest in demanding subsidies, tariffs and other state aids for themselves'.

Neither Stick nor Carrot

Copies of the manifesto and the party programme were handed out to the Department civil servants who described the party as 'incredibly well prepared'. By the time Benn took Heffer's departmental working party paper to cabinet in the late spring of 1974, 95 per cent of the party programme was still intact, but by the time a White Paper was published in August, after over 20 draftings, it had been bowdlerised. Some say that Wilson smelt a leadership plot, others that Benn blundered tactically, reversed the order of the paper and made its language too provocative. But it is doubtful whether Wilson, or Harold Lever, ever admitted that government influence could not be bought without involving the company in a loss of its commercial independence. Wilson had merely waited until it had come to cabinet and he was on his own territory. For whatever the reason, the casualties lay thick on the ground. The NEB was given no rights of compulsory takeover; except in the cases of threatened foreign takeovers the NEB had to proceed on the basis of consent by finding shareholders willing to sell. Planning agreements were no longer compulsory: the stick was taken away. There was no explicit link between such agreements and government financial aid except that regional assistance would be kept at the rates in force at the time of the agreement: the carrot was also taken away. There were no reserve powers to issue directives to companies, nor to remove directors, or put in an official trustee to assume temporary control.

After the initial optimism the first six months had been disastrous for the Left. Heffer argued that the damage could be repaired when the actual Bill emerged after the October election. Benn considered resignation but imagined that the trade unions would put enough pressure on for planning agreements to ensure they would become effectively obligatory. However, when the Bill was published, planning agreements were demoted to a single section – all the foreign activities of companies and the decisions they make about foreign investment were exempted. The Government had also taken the steam out of the trade unions by removing the link between the disclosure of informaton and planning agreements. Stuart Holland had talked of the Pandora's Box of managed and managers which would emerge through planning agreements, but the Government exempted items such as product costs, imports and pricing policies. The Box was finally closed when the link betwen the disclosure of information and planning agreements was removed. After further pressure from the CBI, disclosure was left to the discretion of the Minister, and, even then, he had to give the company three months' notice of the information he required. A company could then object to the passing on of the information to the trade unions on the basis that 'it could cause substantial injury to the industry'. If the Minister accepted this amorphous claim, the trades unions could appeal to a tripartite body, but the Minister would finally decide. As *The Times* wrote on 10 March 1975, 'in trying to allay industry's alarm over the Bill, Mr Wilson and Treasury ministers have this in their favour; much will depend on the spirit in which ministers operate it'. Mr Varley's spirit has been such that he has not used the Bill once as yet to demand information.

It had never been envisaged that planning agreements should become an optional extra in the industrial strategy. But without a powerful backup to planning agreements, the Government is incapable of negotiating the deals which ensure that their own and the large firms' plans mesh in with one another to lift the economy onto a higher flightpath. It was an index of the sceptical expectations of the civil service that they concentrated their negotiations on already captive weak companies like Leyland and Babcock & Wilcox, and it is an index of the legislation's weaknesses that even these agreements have not been secured. Healey is now considering selective financial non-assistance not to companies which spurn planning agreements but to those which bow to excessive pay claims. It seems the only sector of the economy planned with some reserve powers is wages.

Whitehall's overriding desire to reduce the PSBR and avoid balance of payments deficits has led us down a path of deflation, high unemployment and low long-term growth. In this context the level of investment is unlikely to rise of its own accord. The TUC hoped that the sector working parties would assist in the target of 1 million new jobs by 1980. The 39 sectors' reports, however, suggest that there will be little increase in employment. As the TUC economic review formally put it: 'There is thus a dangerous credibility gap between the objectives which both the TUC and the Government have set and the indications from the sector working parties.' Or to put it another way, the TUC think they are being taken for a ride.

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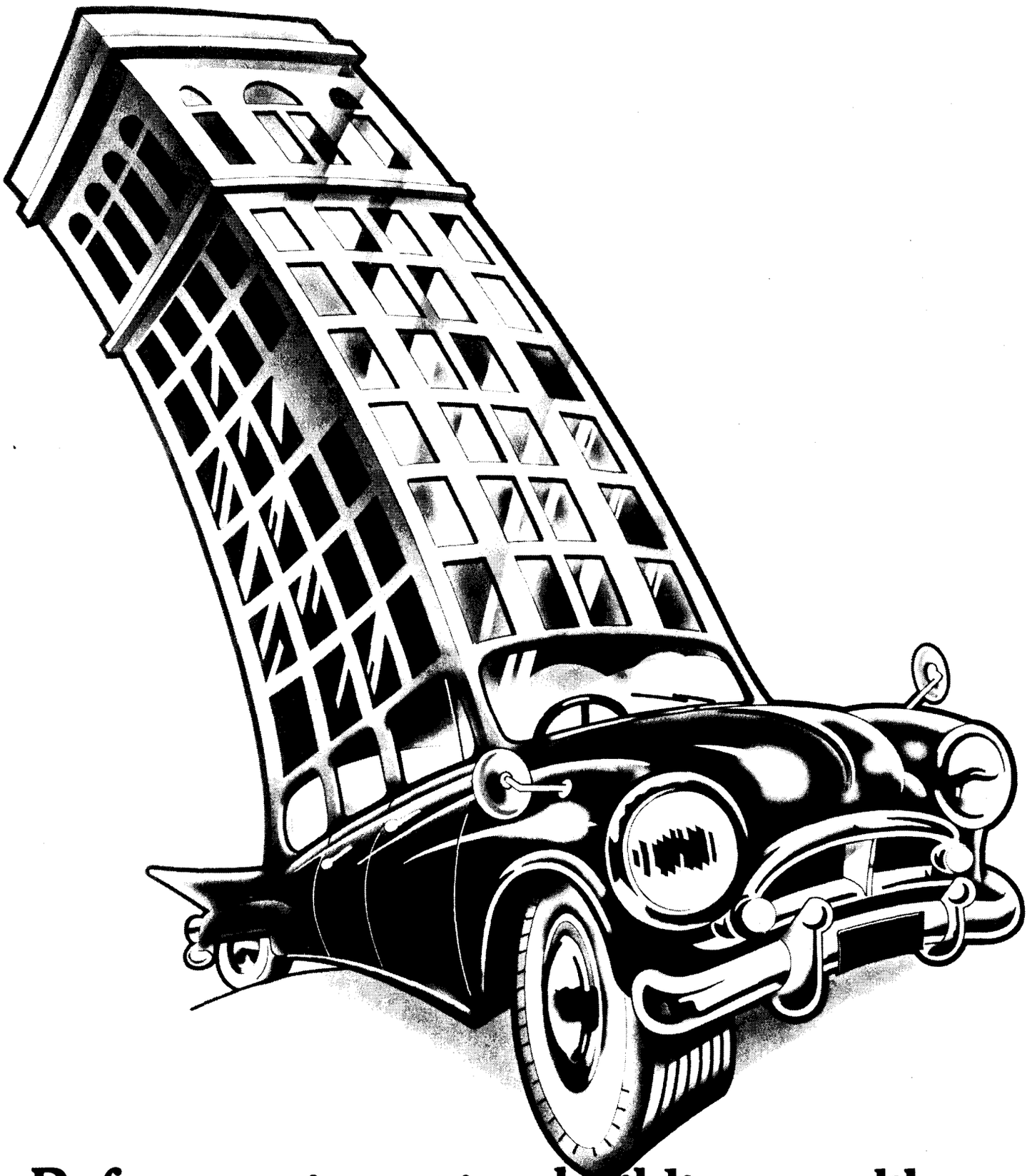

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Oliver Walston

Puffed Wheat

'Let me say right away that I do not consider existing conditions likely.' Thus spoke Peter Sellers's Macmillanesque politician some 15 years ago. He was, of course, referring to the situation facing farmers today. On the thin chalk hills of south Cambridgeshire where water drains away before you realise that it is raining, the old-timers say that 'a ruined hay crop means a good harvest'. Constant rain in late May and June never allows the hay to dry – but it does fill out the grains of wheat and barley. This year the hay crop has been magnificent and there is every indication that the harvest will be one of the best for a long time.

This time last year harvest was almost finished as combines sliced through fields which would not have looked amiss in the Kalahari Desert. Today the start of harvest is still two weeks away. Only the earliest sown winter barleys, which have been in the ground since last September, look even faintly golden. But – another rustic adage coming up – 'Long in the bed, long in the head' (i.e. the longer the plant is in the earth the heavier will be the head of corn), and so farmers are not worried at the prospect of having to wait longer than usual before they unleash their £25,000 machines for three or four weeks frenetic combining.

Needless to say, even with what the press always calls a 'bumper harvest' (farmers talk of 'big' or 'heavy' harvests but never use the word 'bumper') staring them in the face, those involved in Britain's agriculture still cling to their professional pessimism. It may, they warn, be a wet harvest which will involve breakdowns and expensive drying of the corn; it is still not quite too late, they add, with a certain melancholy satisfaction, for disease to strike and cover the leaves with brown or yellow rust. Furthermore, it will certainly be a late harvest; and this (with a strong shake of the head) will not allow enough to prepare the land for sowing in the autumn. As if these bogies were not enough, there remain the economic factors; the price of barley is already dropping in anticipation of the record 17-million-ton cereal harvest that the experts (i.e. merchants who want to see low prices) are predicting. Little wonder, then, given their psychological tendencies, that even the most bullish farmers remain cowed.

Most other sectors of agriculture are also enduring the prospect of prosperity with the sort of fortitude you would expect from the self-styled Yeomen of England. Livestock men have enjoyed an excellent hay and silage season with the grass growing fast and plentiful. The high hay prices of the last two winters will not be repeated this year and motorists trying to escape from the West Country will not be baulked by endless convoys of lorries carrying straw from Suffolk to Cornwall. Beef producers can be confident of the future but are uneasy about the present because consumer resistance is now a very real factor with steak selling for more than £2 per pound. Pig farmers are, and have been for the past year, exceptions to the trend. Common Market farm policy has subsidised Danish pork and bacon imports into this country so that English producers have been unable to compete. As is so often the case, the efficient man with his modern labour-saving set-up has been losing more money than the man with a few old sows scratching round in the mud and farrowing in a rusty Nissen hut. The latter has not borrowed money at high interest rates and is probably self-employed so that he rarely charges for his own time and labour.

The biggest question mark in farming today hangs over the sugar beet fields which litter the eastern side of England and have for the past 50 years provided a profitable break crop between cereals. The last three years have been disastrous for beet growers because of drought and disease. This year looks better but many farmers have had enough and are determined to give up the crop completely. A mounting sugar surplus in Europe, the new process by which sugar (isoglucose to be precise) can be extracted from maize and wheat, and alternative break crops like oilseed rape, have all combined to put the pressure on sugar beet. The British Sugar Corporation, a state monopoly which buys and processes sugar beet, is caught between the need to modernise its factories and the declining acreage of beet. It is a prospect which will excite the northern French farmers who will be only to happy to take up any additional acreage and grow extremely heavy yielding crops of beet on a scale which only a few areas in this country can match. So those who are bad on agronomy but good on colours, should watch out for more yellow (rape) and less green (beet) next year. Maybe even a bit more blue (linseed is very pretty at this time of year) than in the past, and there is even an outside chance that before long Southern England will resemble Yugoslavia with rolling fields of gorgeous sunflowers.

In the political sphere farmers are increasingly unhappy about the Government's performance – or lack of it. The White Paper 'Food from Our Own Resources' now has ivy climbing up it as it stands for all to admire. The latest Minister pays lip-service to its aims without being prepared to put his money remotely near where his mouth is believed to be. It is hardly surprising that farmers are more than ever convinced that he is Minister of Food but not Agriculture. For a brief moment of recorded time pig producers thought that he was on their side when he managed to introduce a subsidy to reduce their losses. But bearing in mind the inherent conflict between a sow's ear and a Silkin purse, it was not surprising when this subsidy was removed at the request of Brussels.

The dialogue between farmers and consumers invariably resembles the England Rugby trial with the Improbables playing the Impossibles (lots of tries but no conversions). But in spite of the fact that most farmers vote Conservative or not at all, there is little belief that things would be any different under a Thatcher regime. Indeed the only Ministers of Agriculture in the postwar period who are remembered with any reverence at all are Tom Williams and Fred Peart. For the latter it is quite an achievement because the Beatification of Ministers is almost invariably a posthumous award. But then *rigor mortis* is an occupational hazard in Their Lordships' House.

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Spectator (6.11.76)

The August issue, just published, contains the following outstanding contributions: a new story by **V. S. Pritchett, Leszek Kolakowski** on *The Euro-Communist Schism*, **Friedrich A. Hayek** on *My Cousin, Ludwig Wittgenstein*, **Michael Young, John Vaizey** and **Daniel Bell** remembering Anthony Crosland, poems by **Peter Redgrove** and **R. S. Thomas, F. S. Manor** asking *Will Canada Break Up?*, **Martin Cooper** on *Musical "Knowing-by-Heart,"* and **Walter Laqueur** on *Heinzen, Godfather of "Terrorism."*

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London Diary

☐ My money is now on a Spring election. Of course it's not what Jim Callaghan wants – given half a chance I'm sure he'd go right down to the wire in October 1979 (just as Alec Douglas-Home did in October 1964). But the past week has snatched that chance, or rather the half-share that he had in it, away from him. With the doctors and the miners pounding at the sluice gates, May or June of next year offers about the last hope the Government can have of going to the country with even a vaguely respectable (say, 10 per cent) inflation figure. It should also be the moment when most voters, however temporarily, will be feeling the benefits of real wages actually rising. There's still one snag, though: if the Government gets locked into a major strike over pay this coming winter, I'd expect to see Jim Callaghan – to borrow an LBJ phrase – 'hunkering down'. Politicians may not remember much; but I doubt if anyone in the Labour Party has yet forgotten the moral of February 1974.

☐ An intriguing story reaches me about Margaret Thatcher. Apparently, before going on the air for last week's *Panorama*, she insisted on being allowed ten minutes' silent meditation all by herself. Nothing, you may say, wrong with that – except that the last person I heard of insisting on the same solitude was Keith Joseph. Who said the old *guru* had lost his power?

☐ For those who want a worm's eye view of politics I wholeheartedly recommend last week's 'Report of the Select Committee on the Conduct of Members'. But don't go to the report first; instead start off by reading the account of the oral evidence. It's all there: the bluster, the swagger, the bombast and the pathos. Mr Albert Roberts (the Labour MP for Normanton) emerges as the saddest figure – sadder in a way even than John Poulson himself, though together they proved easily the most crumpled of the various witnesses. There was certainly nothing crumpled about Mr John Cordle, as he later showed with his ludicrous claim about having been 'vindicated' by the report. Mr Cordle, incidentally, was the only witness to be accompanied by counsel. But from the transcript it's obvious that not even the talents of Sir John Foster could help him much. Mr Maudling and Lord Glenamara (our old friend Ted Short) never struck me before as having much in common, but their technique with the committee was strangely similar: hit on one phrase – in Mr Maudling's case 'helping a charity' and in Lord Glenamara's 'I only mirrored his words' – and keep banging away at it. Mr Maudling probably had the worse luck of the two. Lord Glenamara may not much have cared for his cross-examination over the letter he wrote to Mr T. Dan Smith accepting his offer of a retainer of £500 'provided it can be kept a confidential matter between the two of us' – but at least he had ample opportunity of explaining what he meant. Mr Maudling, by contrast, was never asked a single question about the letter he wrote to the Prime Minister on resigning as Home Secretary – and yet that is the matter which attracts the committee's heaviest censure.

☐ What obituarists do *not* say about great men has always seemed to me a great deal more interesting than what they actually do. Proper respect has already been paid to the novelist William Gerhardie as a literary stylist and influence (notably on Evelyn Waugh and Anthony Powell). But Gerhardie also had his eccentricities. I liked the story Michael Ivens told on the radio on Wednesday of how, in the Thirties, he once sailed to North Africa in search of a harem. By a Gerhardien quirk, he shared a cabin with Himmler who was fascinated by his project – confessing to Gerhardie that he had married for money for the sake of the Nazi party. Gerhardie, who was something of a hypochondriac, decided to buy flea powder before setting out for the female markets; and Himmler insisted he was an expert on flea powder and personally tested the products before allowing his friend to buy them. The adventure was unsuccessful. All the flesh offered Gerhardie was extravagantly over – or under – age, and he returned wryly to London to advertise for a secretary in order to find a suitable lady. Here, though without Himmler's assistance, he was happily more successful.

☐ Someone who was there tells me that by far the best speech at last Saturday's Durham miners' gala was made, as has happened before, by the NUM's general secretary Lawrence Daly. Yet not a word of it appeared on TV or in the newspapers. So far as both were concerned the 'story' was either of Mr Callaghan being booed or of Mr Scargill being aggressive. Of course television has a special need for 'action shots'; but newspapers are, or should be, a different case. I add that 'should be' deliberately. For 17 years ago this month I was taken by Alistair Cooke down to the sports arena in Los Angeles – where the Democrats nominated Kennedy – on the day before the Convention opened. Mr Cooke, I remember, looked up at the roof girders, studied the chairs, made a note or two about the bunting – and then crisply said 'Okay, I'll see you on Friday.' He then took himself off to his suite with TV set in the Beverley Hills Hotel – from which he didn't emerge until the Convention was safely over. His copy, as always, was idiosyncratic, stylish and elegant; but that hardly altered the fact that all the raw material for it had come to him filtered through the TV tube. Ever since then I've never doubted the ability of television to dictate the agenda even to the best of newspapermen.

☐ Whenever we use foreign terms in the NS, we seem to be rebuked. Last week Willi Frischauer wrote to say we'd got our German wrong: which, if a trifle unkind, at least makes a difference from all the people who object to the use of any non-English words at all, either from misguided nationalism or, more respectably, because they don't understand them. I am as bad at languages as anyone, but at least it's a relief, from the tourist industry point of view, to see the effort shops and buses are taking to show our visitors where to buy (Sales: *Soldes, Saldi, Schliessverkauf*) or how to queue (*bitten anstellen*, etc.). Of course some words are essential, and untranslatable. So if I've made mistakes this week, you can all experience *Schadenfreude* – joy in someone else's suffering.

☐ Unsettling insights into the Tribuneite sense of justice were provided last Sunday by the annual NEW STATESMAN v. *Tribune* cricket match. Whenever the ball passed within a yard of a speculative NS bat the opposition's slips would leap and bellow like Australians; their opening bowler was widely rumoured to be a mercenary; and John Coleman's appeal against the light (it wasn't dark enough for him) was rejected with unfeeling derision. Hardly surprising, then, that the first match ended as it did (NS 74; *Tribune* 75-4), or that a former NS editor could be heard loudly bewailing left-wing fascism. The beer match which followed (*Tribune* 110-8; NS 111-6) revealed further moral decline (*Tribune*, with 16 fielders, could well afford their six slips and three gullies), but was at least enlivened by the sight of Russell Kerr (reminiscent in embonpoint of Gloucestershire's David Shepherd) starting his run-up, Proctor-style, from the pavilion steps, and getting gradually slower and wearier as he approached the wicket.

☐ I'm not usually much of a one for *graffiti* – but some wall-dialogue that confronts me every morning on my way to work may perhaps be worth recording. It all started with the slightly bewildering two words: 'Why Not?' Within a day the question had collected its own answer: 'Because I don't go in for that sort of thing.' Predictably a wag was soon adding: 'But I do!' He hasn't, however, been allowed the last word. Below has now appeared the admonitory line: 'Be careful, or you'll go blind.' So far that has concluded the exchange.

Crucifer

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Amiss's place in the 12 is the only one in doubt. Personally I fervently hope that the selectors lean over backwards to keep him in, because he is such a good influence in the dressing room. – *Evening Standard* (David Candler)

☐ Harmonium, 11 stop, ornate, 1898. Will sell or trade for goat with kid or in kid or Rayburn Cooker. – *Friday-Ad, Uckfield* (Mrs M. Rabbetts)

☐ The magistrates' clerk at Torbay, Mr Mervyn Geidt, fed up with the flood of jobless enjoying a holiday on the dole at the Devon resort, suggested yesterday a return to the Elizabethan Poor Law. – *Daily Telegraph* (P. M. G. Shiel)

☐ Homosexuals, habitual drunkards, thieves and men with physical and mental problems are being secretly barred from courses designed to help people with social problems to find work. – *Guardian* (Robin Paxton)

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Audrey Harvey

Housing Casualties in Court

By 10.15 a.m. the big East London court was packed and smelt of poverty, unlike other county courts in more salubrious areas on landlord-and-tenant days. Now, thanks to Tony Crosland's Rent Act of three summers ago, there are far fewer claims for possession by private landlords and homelessness from this source has dropped by 17 per cent – what better memorial? But private landlordism in this area has for decades been on its way out. The people here, summonsed as defendants, represent our modern image of the masses and of what they deserve. All have indoor lavatories. All have hot water as long as they can foot the bill. Many too many others, of course, live in dirt and darkness because they can't.

They are the casualties of the council tenant system – the inhabitants of not eminently cherishable concrete dwellings on often wildly vandalised estates, who are mostly poor in an additional sense, that of being on state benefits. A good many are young mothers who have had to bring their babies. Most of the men are unemployed. No one is legally represented. Yet a red-haired woman sitting alone declines a tentative offer of help: 'No thanks, love – I don't give a bugger what they do to me – it's all a bleeding farce.' At that moment it was 'all stand' for the Registrar who, rather than a judge, and in more subfusc attire, takes these working-class no-interest cases.

Perhaps that woman had no children; or perhaps she had already been demoted by the council from a modern fl... near the supermarkets to old poverty-ghetto property in some part-demolished wilderness, this being a favoured city method nowadays for dealing with owers of rent. Elsewhere, for instance under the most merciless of the Welsh authorities, families with very young children are simply turned away and told not to darken official doors again until their debts are paid. Not everyone in this court, though, necessarily owes rent. Under our biggest and most powerful landlords (and leading evicters), people can lose their homes because there is no right of inheritance, or because a death in the family leaves a spare room, or because neighbours don't care for the outward signs of mental illness – all actual cases. Here, a family looking like Middle Eastern shepherds have been manufacturing objects of some kind in what they should have used only as a dwelling. 'You had better give up your work,' the Registrar says drily, 'and go on social security.' In some county courts defendants are asked if they have anything to say: 'What can I say?' an old man furiously replies, 'when I don't understand nothing of what's going on?' But that Registrar briskly told him to 'ask the council people outside' and proceeded to grant an order against an understandably aggrieved ambulance-driver with an ill wife who was regularly and dutifully paying off his debt at £3 a week.

Once a town hall legal department has got into gear – typically without the smallest information about the tenant's personal circumstances – only threatened publicity will stop it. Because most local authorities no longer collect rent, defaulters on their lists have been found, by chance, to be cancer victims or to be housebound with some desperate disablement and quite unable to pay both their fuel bill and their rent. This particular Registrar did not announce – typically – that he had no power to refuse a possession order because local authorities are 'outside the Rent Acts'. Instead he addressed each defendant with a rhetorical: 'You know you have no rights?'

Both formulas, however, are deceptive. Council tenants have the same right as others under a Housing Act of 1961 to bring a counter-claim against their council landlords for neglecting certain repairs. More important, their landlords have had a common law duty since 1948 to act fairly and reasonably, while for the last few years – following some observations of Lord Justice Scarman in the Court of Appeal – they have had to have regard to central government policy. This means, evicting only as a last resort – after trying, for instance, to recoup arrears via a tenant's employer – and then only if somewhere else to live can be offered. Ironically, the original responsibility for this guidance belongs to the Tory MP Hugh Rossi – that assiduous underminer of the Liberal Stephen Ross's splendid Housing (Homeless Persons) Bill, now in the Lords, to lay a duty on housing authorities not only to house the homeless but to prevent people with houses from losing them.

Meanwhile, in none of six county courts specially visited did any tenant protest that the council had not acted fairly or reasonably by, for instance, failing to check that he had all the available allowances, and at maximum entitlement – failing, that's to say, to check his capacity to pay and also very possibly refusing, for the sake of administrative convenience, to accept part payments. Not that this lack of protest was even faintly surprising. On the contrary, council tenants are in a worse position than any others to defend themselves. Their notices to quit do not have to tell them that they can only be evicted by court order or where they can go for advice, as those of private landlords now have to do. Unfortunately, though, this might not make a startling difference. There is far too heavy a dependence on local authority money among advice services and it handicaps our very few immensely valuable law centres. As for self-employed private solicitors, they have for decades simply assumed that a council tenant in rent arrears automatically has no case. Of course that tenant gets, with his court summons, the usual form on which to admit or to dispute his landlord's claim. But to dispute it unaided he needs to be familiar not only with statute law but with common law as well. And it now looks from another case in the Court of Appeal (*Cannock Chase District Council* v. *Kelly*) as if the only technical means of defence for the tenant will be by counterclaim.

Some county court judges dislike issuing possession orders as if they were sheets of postage stamps and charging tenants, usually £15, for the privilege; some are equally clearly delighted if local authority power is challenged and occasionally question it themselves, or at least make some show of reading the usually hopeless irrelevant defences that the less passive or cynical or despairing tenants put in. Our Registrar did not go as far as that: he was a kindly man, one who likes to crack a little judicial joke, or amuse by removing his wig to scratch his head, and who even suffered little children to enter the defendant's box – but not, emphatically, a 'right man'. Later he had one private landlord's claim which should have been thrown out on a technicality (the landlord had not bought the house by the legally necessary date) but which he granted: the sort of thing which, because of lack of tenant representation, happens with terrifying frequency in these courts.

People in high legal circles say regretfully that county court justice is of the palm tree variety – but why should this be accepted? A system of justice found farcical and therefore contemptible by the poor is a danger as well as a disgrace. The best that can be said on behalf of it is that it doesn't take up much time. Long before lunch the court was able to shut for the rest of the day. In an hour and a half 130 council tenants had been dealt with.

Roger Woddis

Cryptic

Sir Harold Wilson is reported to have told two journalists following a security trail: 'I might tell you to go to the Charing Cross Road and kick a blind man sitting on the corner.'

Or then again, I might suggest,
Next Thursday, when the moon is full,
A midnight trip to Hounslow West,
And there outside the 'Cock and Bull'
You'll find a trail of aniseed:
You never know where that will lead.

The times are darker than you think,
The trusting soul will not survive;
Watch out for dustmen wearing pink,
They're probably from MI5,
And funny noises on the 'phone
Will tell you we are not alone.

They're everywhere, these blinkered types,
They keep in touch by semaphore,
They burgle me, they steal my pipes,
They even bug my Labrador;
And look, here's Mary's latest ode –
She's written it in secret code.

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

Travelling Hopefully

Partly because of my advanced years and the necessity to keep as calm as possible (blood pressure, and all that) and partly because I am keen on taking the fullest advantage of all the mini-benefits so sparingly dished out to us senior citizens (and where, may I ask, was the crisp Christmas tenner that had once been promised? Not even so much as a 10p piece came struggling through to 'Myrtlebank'). I now always travel first class, and therefore relatively uncrumpled, on our high speed, inter-city railways. Though the attack launched by courageous Corelli Barnett in *The Times* on the new-fashioned, open-plan cattle trucks dreamt up by the finest minds in British Rail was fully justified (vilely hard seats, odious colour schemes, the impossibility of anywhere propping the head and resting it comfortably for sleeping purposes, and the questionably delicious food that only expense accounts can afford), in the first class there is undoubtedly slightly more space and the percentage of 'kiddies' running disturbingly to and fro is smaller. By the way, an umbrella deftly thrust sideways out into the gangway can occasionally trip one of them up, bring it down and thus provide a valuable discouragement. Feign anxious solicitude when mothers look suspiciously at you. Parental control of children has now become as ineffective here as it has always been in America, so let us all do what we can.

Travelling recently from Exeter to London, the train stopped, as so often, at Reading, presumably to scoop up from fairly nearby Heathrow those air travellers who had now decided to press on by rail. Apart from being the fountain-head of tasty biscuits, and its interesting literary associations with Oscar Wilde (so difficult in youth to discover what exactly he had *done*, innocent questions merely producing lowered voices and 'Sh, dear! '), Reading is not perhaps the most fascinating of towns, though in this respect I must be careful what I say by way of disparagement. Chatting recently with an old chum, the delightful Jean Metcalfe, on the BBC's almost dementedly jolly and jokey-voiced morning *Open House* programme, I drew attention at one point to what I considered to be the non-pleasures of Hull, and within three minutes an outraged resident had telephoned, and at peak-cost time too, demanding an apology (instantly provided). I have now learnt my lesson and so, during our pause at picturesque and memory-haunted Reading, two elderly and non-descript ladies, clutching airbags and duty-free substances, made as though to enter our coach, drawing back politely when they saw that it was not the class for which they had tickets. Upon which, a ticket-collector suddenly appeared, encouraged them in and settled them down, announcing in ringing tones and giving us all a firm look that 'this coach has now been downgraded'. Your sense of shock will be as great as mine. Was there ever such an insult and smack in the eye? When I purchased my expensive first-class seat at St David's Station, Exeter, where all is invariably courtesy and charm, nobody thought to warn me that I was going to be ignominiously and brutally down-graded at colourful, leafy and amenity-packed Reading. If I was the fuming kind, with a thrombosis just around the corner, I would have fumed all the way to Paddington.

My father used, pre-war, to fume freely. By no means everything on the, to me, faultless Great Western was to his liking. He was apt sometimes to ask train-drivers at journey's end why they had had to drive their engines 'so jerkily'. The replies were lost in escaping steam. Just as well. Another of his mild eccentricities was, when we went away on holiday and the house was shut up, to close and lock the piano, removing the key. This always seemed to me to be hard luck on burglars who, after they had stuffed our silver and my mother's Persian lamb coat into a large bag labelled SWAG, might want tunefully to celebrate their haul with a few Chopin études or, in more thoughtful and grateful vein, a keyboard setting of 'Bless This House'.

We lived then at Newbury and I noticed no such train imperfections for the railway-line ended in London, and in London there were theatres, however jerkily we might reach them. It was possible, a fact which becomes increasingly hard to believe, in those days to 'do' a matinée, as racy people phrased it, at a cost of slightly less than £1, a sum known, again only to the racy, as a Bradbury, or 'Brad' ('I say, old bean, lend me a Brad'), after the Bank of England official who signed the note and promised the bearer to shell out, on demand, 20 shillings. The lopped-off monosyllable reminds me happily of a winning entry in a long-ago NS competition for monosyllabic advertisements: 'Prog. coup. wish meet prog. coup. view share hol. bung. Sex ab. no ob.' We must, I fancy, assume that the 'ab.' is a shortened form of either 'aberrations' or 'abnormalities'. 'Ob.' is, of course, 'objection'.

But to our £1's worth, and the year (around 1926). The return railway fare to Paddington (crumpled travel) was 6s 9d. The cost of the bus to Piccadilly was negligible (3d, I suppose, if that). The four-course lunch on the first floor gallery of the Café Royal (and what a rip one felt!) came to 3s 6d (waiter delighted, apparently, with 6d). An upper circle seat for whatever Binnie Hale or Cicely Courtneidge or Gertrude Lawrence happened to be in at the time was 5s., programme 6d. Even with a reckless order of tea in the interval, you were about two bob in hand on your return home, ears still a-tingle with melody for those were, indeed, the days when, emerging from any popular musical entertainment by Gershwin or Coward or Richard Rodgers, there were in your head at least three tunes that refused for weeks to dislodge themselves.

On my return from one of these matinée jaunts a piece of unexpected good fortune came my way. I was seated alone in a compartment of the 6 p.m. out of Paddington and we were barely rattling through Ealing when there entered from the corridor somebody of about my own age (17), followed shortly after by two older men of a *louche*-looking, race-going type. Suspicious. As we went whizzing through Slough, they invited the younger one to play, at a Bradbury a time, what I think is called Spot The Lady or the three-card-trick – the identification of the back of the Queen of Spades from two other cards juggled swiftly about. In next to no time the young man had won quite a tidy sum.

The performance was, of course, being set up for my benefit. The three of them were in league. I suppose that I looked, sitting there in my tidy, grey pin-stripe theatre-going suit, affluent and fully fleeceable. Soon they turned to me. Would I care to have a go? 'Yes,' I said, greatly daring in view of my remaining two shillings but knowing that they always encouraged victims with an early win. I picked out without difficulty the queen and was handed a pound note. 'Here we go again,' they said. 'Thank you, no,' I primly replied, 'I have played sufficiently.'

Amazement, disbelief, realisation, anger, fury and those looks that are called 'ugly' and promise fisticuffs. I was contemplating tugging the communication cord (£5 for Improper Use, and what use could be more proper than mine?) when the guard happened to pass along the corridor and I nipped quickly out and engaged him in animated conversation, subsequently locking myself in the lavatory. Disreputable behaviour all round, really, but it meant a free matinée next week (*The Last of Mrs Cheyney*, if memory serves, and worth every penny of the serious risk of life and limb).

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Letters to the Editor

Myra Hindley and Parole

Sir, Lord Longford (NS 15 July) takes a high moral tone and so cannot complain if he is replied to on the same plane. He makes a most unfortunate impression by his skating around Myra Hindley's refusal to acknowledge any guilt beyond 'cruel' and 'criminal' behaviour to a helpless little girl. Does she and Lord Longford wish us to believe that she did not know children were being killed? Surely to a pair of such very religious Catholics this should be of prime concern, worthy of a full explanation?

The sad truth is more likely that, like the 'St Albans' prisoner, she is a charming, manipulative and very intelligent psychopath who if let out would, like him, soon be up to her tricks again. What would Lord Longford say then? What would the child's parents say?

Let her be kept under humane and civilised conditions, in prison, until she dies.

A. SANDMAN

57 Primrose Hill Court
King Henry's Road
London NW3

Sir, What makes Lord Longford's article on Myra Hindley so disturbing is his total failure to understand the views of other people. He apparently believes that vengeance is the chief motive that explains opposition to Myra Hindley's release. If a penal system is to command respect, it must not assign punishments grossly disproportionate to the gravity of a crime. Today the idea of hanging a pickpocket affronts public conscience. It should be equally obvious that to free someone convicted of torturing and killing children after only 12 years' imprisonment would bring the law into utter contempt.

This would be true whatever Myra Hindley's present state of mind, but her conduct in prison, despite Longford's comments, provides considerable evidence that she has not altered much in character. Even if this evidence were not available, neither he nor anyone else can know how she would react to the temptations of the world outside prison.

AMOS C. MILLER

23 Waterloo Court
Heath Close
London NW11

Sir, Lord Longford does not advance the cause of penal reform by the 'demand' that his favourites should have a chance of early release on the grounds that they are 'sensitive and responsive', that they are 'nice and attractive', or that Lady Longford 'took to them at once'. Nor does he help his protegée by the singular cruelty of working hardly less assiduously than the *News of the World* itself to ensure that she stays prominently in the pillory of publicity as a target for everyone's rotten eggs.

We do not know what Lord Longford's correspondent had in mind when writing that he was 'a thoroughly selfish, stupid, foul old man', but it is not a wholly unsuitable description of someone who, by the ostentatious ineptitude of his support for good causes, does those causes so much harm.

DON PETERS

32 Newman Street
London W1

Sir, May I take the occasion of Lord Longford's article on Myra Hindley to ask why, when a man and a woman commit a crime together, it invariably appears that the latter acted under the dominating influence of the former – even when (as in the case of Dr Rose Dugdale) she is obviously more intelligent and forceful than he is? Why does one never, ever, hear of a man committing a crime under the dominating influence of a woman? And isn't it high time that the feminists took a stand against this scandalous and demeaning manifestation of sexual chauvinism?

D. WATKINS

Gaycroft
Laleston
Bridgend, Glam.

An Anti-NAFF Conspiracy?

Sir, I would not wish to disappoint Mr Peter Dunn by failing to sustain his image of me (NS 15 July) as someone who fires off letters to editors when provoked. I once felt compelled to do this in response to something he had written after a ludicrous episode in which he hounded me and my colleagues in the National Association for Freedom with questions like 'Is it true that NAFF has hired a disused section of the London Underground for paramilitary purposes?' That, of course, is another story. Perhaps one can forgive Mr Dunn, given his views, for choosing to investigate only those aspects of NAFF's record which suit his conspiracy theory. What is unforgivable is that, failing to find sufficient facts to suit his purpose, he resorts to inventing them.

In a throwaway line in last week's article, he says that 'Lady Birdwood is welcome to send a cheque to support the Grunwick campaign'. If he had bothered to read the last issue of *Free Nation*, he would have seen that the cheque from Lady Birdwood's 'Self Help' organisation was returned. We have always dissociated ourselves from those who pursue racialist policies or are linked with the extreme Right – but are rarely given credit for this by the Left.

It is also nonsense to say that we planned to take legal action over the Sex Pistols' interview with Bill Grundy. Mr Dunn writes that NAFF was set up 'two years' ago. In fact, we are a bit younger than that, barely 19 months. Anyone who studies the complete record of our activities over this period would hardly think it accurate to say, as he does, that we have been 'dogged by incipient obscurity' – even though NAFF is a campaign organisation, funded with very limited resources, and hugely dependent on volunteer effort, including my own.

What annoys me most about Mr Dunn's article is his trivialising approach to the social and economic problems that give NAFF its raison d'être. He is another of those middle-class scribes who earns a living by insulting the middle-class, exuding snickering phrases about their 'embittered dreams and aspirations'. Embittered? The use of such language about those groups in our society whose economic initiative and traditional thrift are treated with contempt by a Government that seems content to represent only the leadership of the biggest trade unions is more revealing about the author himself than about those he purports to describe.

I do not know Mr Dunn, but I doubt that he is brimming over with the milk of human kindness. Violence does not 'morbidly fascinate' anyone I know in NAFF. If some of us are security conscious, it is worth recalling that Ross McWhirter was murdered on his own doorstep by the IRA, that a NAFF council member, James Nicholson, was shot dead on a business trip to Belfast (although I would stress that there was no connection between this murder and his membership of NAFF) and that several people who are active in NAFF, including myself, have experienced thefts of papers from our homes or offices.

As far as the Grunwick dispute is concerned, I would be interested to see if Mr Dunn is prepared to conduct similar inquiries into the backgrounds and political connections of left-wing strike organisers and into the financing of the picket lines. In the same issue, you run a heart-rending account of how someone picked up on the Grunwick picket line had to endure the stench from an open lavatory in a police cell. I am sure it is not beyond the investigative resources of the NEW STATESMAN to give us a breakdown of the differing inducements that have drawn people to join the mob outside Grunwick. We know about the miners' £15 a day plus £5 expenses. Is it even possible, Mr Dunn, that some people were drawn there by a 'morbid fascination' with violence?

ROBERT MOSS
Director
National Association for Freedom
11 Grape Street
London WC2

Protecting Our Lord

Sir, It is important that the precise meaning of the jury's verdict in the *Gay News* is widely understood. Unfortunately it is now impossible for the general public to make up their own minds about James Kirkup's poem, since it has achieved the surely unique status of being illegal. But the most poignant feature of this case from the very beginning was that Professor Kirkup's poem is not anti-Christian. It does not abuse Christ, or ridicule him, or even re-interpret the Crucifixion in the style of *Son of Man* or *Superstar*; on the contrary, it is written from the point of view of explicit Christian belief. It asserts faith in the Resurrection. Either Professor Kirkup is himself actually a Christian, or he chose to speak as one in this poem.

What caused offence, of course, was that his imagery was very forcibly and indeed almost overpoweringly physical, and he expressed himself as a homosexual man. He spoke of physical love for Christ's body and of Christ's own physical love for other men, both his friends and his enemies. This language could be taken literally, or it could be taken symbolically; doubtless, in the manner of poetry, it was meant to be both. But the law cannot take cognisance of poetic ambiguity; in a court of law words have only one meaning. When the jury convicted the poem they decided, not that it is blasphemous to use supposed homosexuality as a way of attacking Christ, but that it is blasphemous to use homosexual imagery to *praise* Christ. This is what is so appalling about the present state of the law; the jury have ruled, accepting the arguments of the prosecution, that homosexuality is in itself so obscene that to bring it into conjunction with the person of Christ is in itself a blasphemy, irrespective of what the writer is actually saying.

This, surely, is what the demonstrators outside the Old Bailey meant when tthey said that every homosexual was on trial inside. The whole trial underlined most bitterly just in what contempt the common law of England holds the homosexual population of this country. The homosexual imagination is, in England, in legal chains: held to be inherently obscene, inherently blasphemous, inherently punishable. That Denis Lemon now stands in danger of imprisonment because he published

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an expression of that imagination is an outrage beyond words.

GRAEME WOOLASTON

10 Sandrock Road
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Fair Game?

Sir, If Mervyn Jones (London Diary, 8 July) had substituted 'Jews' for 'Moslems' in his ignorant and supercilious paragraph on the divinity of Christ, there would have been an outcry. Try it: '. . . we could be moving towards an assimilation of Christianity to Judaism. And what would that mean? Compulsory circumcision, segregated congregations, no milk with meat, no pork or bacon. How can any NS reader be indifferent?' As it is, no doubt indifference will prevail: Moslems (most of them Arabs or Pakistanis, you see, and therefore sinister or comical persons) are fair game for thinly disguised racialist remarks. You would never have printed such offensive rubbish about Jews.

ANTHONY THWAITE

The Mill House
Low Tharston
Norfolk

Press Commission Protocol

Sir, Paul Johnson's note at the end of the letter from David Basnett and Geoffrey Goodman which you published on 15 July, explains that the Chairman of the Royal Commission and I knew of Mr Johnson's intention to write an article for the NEW STATESMAN following the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission. Mr Johnson adds that neither the Chairman nor I raised any objection and that neither of us was responsible for what he had written.

I am writing to add that Mr Johnson consulted us only on the question of parliamentary privilege as it might apply to the publication of an article on the same day as the report. He did not ask our view of the propriety of writing such an article, or tell us what he was going to put in it, or show it to us before publication.

FRANCIS GOLDING
Acting Secretary

Royal Commission on the Press
27 Northumberland Avenue
London WC2

Finland's Example

Sir, Mr Harri Väre (Letters 15 July) is quite right that I did the obvious in setting up Free Enterprise Day. But I would not like to take away the credit from Mr Väre's compatriots. Finland set up a free enterprise week over 30 years ago. It has had large participation, and even went on during the enormous movement by population after the cessation of territory to the Russians. It now consists of a free enterprise month – a week in each of the four areas of Finland. The sponsoring organisation is Yrittäjäin Keskusliitto, and we acknowledged this by giving them a special award in 1975.

MICHAEL IVENS
Director

Aims for Freedom and Enterprise
5 Plough Place
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Far Flung Corners

Sir, Tim Hopkins, winner of Competition 2469, notes the curiously high proportion of correct crossword puzzle solutions opened with foreign stamps on them. Now seems the moment to disclose that twice in the past I have won by mailing the correct solution to someone in, successively, Nairobi and Singapore, and having them post it back to Great Turnstile from there. It was a good 20 years ago. But I'm wondering how many of the other winners are operating a similar system.

PAUL VAUGHAN

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London SW19

North Yemen's History

Sir, Your readers could be forgiven for imagining that they were being presented with the week's deliberate mistake in the first paragraph of my article on the North Yemen in last week's NEW STATESMAN. The civil war, of course, *began* not *ended* shortly before the Americans entered Vietnam (a general point to show how recent it was). It is not strictly true to say, either, that it was prompted by the overthrow of the Imam Ahmad. Ahmad died and was succeeded by his son in 1962. Eight days later *he* was overthrown, and nearly killed, in a palace revolution. Apologies for what were my own slips.

IAIN GUEST

Knodishall Lodge
Saxmundham, Suffolk

Howzatt?

Sir, Fred Trueman and/or Mervyn Jones (NS 15 July) obviously didn't do their homework. A quick glance at *Wisden* or *Who's Who* would have revealed that David Sheppard did captain England in 1954, the year before he became an assistant curate.

GRAHAM TAYAR

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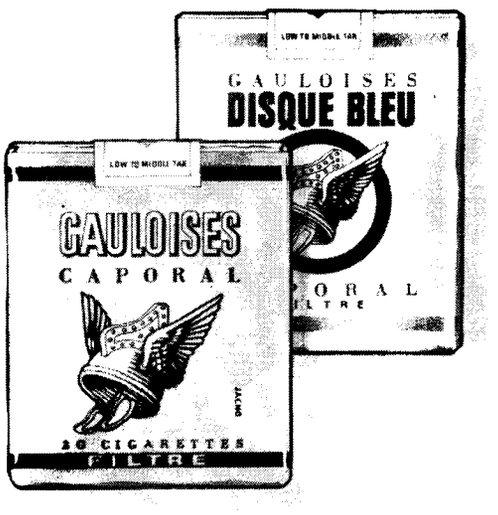
Un paquet de Gauloises filtre s'il vous plait–on parle Francais ici hein? comme dit le signe dans la vitrine? Formidable! Quoi **Pas de cigarettes francaises? Etonnant!** Des allumettes francaises peut-etre? Non? Des pipes, des briquets, du tabac francais? **Rien? Rien du tout de francais.** Alors pourquoi parler francais? D'accord. **D'accord.** Ne t'en fais pas. Mais attends, mon vieux, le jour ou tu chercheras a Paris des woodbines! Zut!



Gauloises
from tobacconists

"LOW TO MIDDLE TAR"
As defined by H.M Government
EVERY PACKET CARRIES A GOVERNMENT HEALTH WARNING.

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

John Carey

Perish Every Laggard

E. M. Forster: A Life. Vol. 1: The Growth of the Novelist, 1879-1914 by P. N. FURBANK *Secker & Warburg* £6.50

E. M. Forster was 30, and had published three novels, before he altogether understood how copulation took place. Till then he was under the impression that the man placed his stomach against the woman's and warmed her. This innocence derived largely from his upbringing. His father died when he was one, and he spent his childhood, indulged and imperious, in (as he later put it) 'a haze of elderly ladies'. It was a refined haze. A pair of his female relatives once complained that they were kept awake at night by the 'coarse voices' of crickets. Foremost among the ladies was his father's aunt, Marianne Thornton (aptly nicknamed 'Monie'). Bossy but astute, this last survivor of the Clapham Sect discerned the infant Forster's idolatrous attachment to objects – his 'memory for old toys and love for sticks and stones' – and her legacy of £8,000 eventually enabled him to become a writer. He repaid her kindness by satirising the clannishness of the Thorntons in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*.

Forster's mother, who came from a rather jolly Bohemian family of painters and sailors, played a major role in suppressing what virility he might have had. Under her influence he learned to refer to his penis (if at all) as his 'dirty'. He wore shoulder-length curls and lace-collared suits, and was lagged with mufflers at the least threat of inclement weather. Passers-by mistook him for a girl. But though his long love-affair with his mother proved irksome as he matured, it made his childhood, as P. N. Furbank relates, radiantly happy. After the shortest absence he would smother her with kisses as if they had been parted for years. His childish wit and capriciousness burgeoned in the tender warmth she created round him. Besides, from her and her lady friends he acquired a close understanding of snobbery and innuendo, which was of infinitely more service to a future novelist than an acquaintance with the reproductive organs. On visits to friends, and later travelling together in Italy, he and his mother applied themselves with zest to the dissection of their fellow mortals, and young Forster's ear for trivia became valuably acute. 'Conductors say "two pence" not "tuppence",' his diary sagely records.

Another great advantage of his pampered childhood was that it rendered him exquisitely vulnerable when he came to mix with boys of his own age. They quickly identified him as their natural prey. A cousin known as Blowdy Wags, his earliest persecutor, blew a whistle in his ear, at which he screamed and cried for hours. 'This horrid boy', Forster later testified, 'was the first to demonstrate to me that I was a coward.' At prep school he found himself an unskinned prawn among fully-armed crustaceans, and was thus admirably placed to gather unlimited information about cruelty and loneliness. The experience also gave him a perspective on the English class system. By the time he had been withdrawn, in floods of tears, from his second prep school – an establishment for 'the sons of gentlemen' – he had persuaded himself that 'If only they were not the sons of gentlemen they would not be so unkind.' Almost certainly he was wrong. Workers' children would probably have torn him to pieces. But the special kind of brutality he needed to know about for his writing was the kind that good breeding nurtures, and prep school taught him this.

So, with conspicuous efficiency, did Tonbridge (later 'Sawston School' in *The Longest Journey*). It had been taken over, shortly before Forster's arrival, by a new headmaster, the Rev. 'Joey' Wood, DD – a beetle-browed eminence, attentive to team spirit and the more socially desirable parents. He was fond of modelling his sermons round the words of the school anthem ('Perish every laggard . . .'), laying stress on the lines which exhort Tonbridgeans to seize 'harp or sword or pen' for life's battle. According to Forster, the Rev. Wood always recommended the sword as the noblest choice, because it might lead to the death of a fellow creature. Under his aegis bullying was virtually part of the academic curriculum, senior pupils being allowed to kick new boys as one of their privileges. Forster, in later life, refused to talk about the miseries of the place, beyond admitting that he had been pelted with chestnuts. Other Old Boys proved more forthcoming. 'Forster? The writer? Yes, I remember him. A little cissy. We took it out of him, I can tell you,' a schoolfriend reminisced when questioned by Mr Furbank in the 1950s. As he moved up the school Forster got better at merging into the background and avoiding trouble. He became buttoned-up, droopy and mute.

At Cambridge he blossomed, but it was a withered sort of blossoming. He parted company with his religious faith (it had never been much to write home about) under the influence of friends like Nathaniel Wedd, who characterised Christianity as 'the bloody swinish bunkum that the prize idiots of the two Universities use to cloak their erotic tendencies'. The other 'grand discovery' of his young manhood was his homosexuality. There had been hints of it before – idyllic tumblings and ticklings in the straw with the gardener's boys at Rooksnest (the old gabled house near Stevenage which Forster adored as a child, and transformed into Howard's End). But at Cambridge he met Hugh Meredith, who was to become his first lover. Their love never progressed beyond kisses and embraces. To Forster it spelt emancipation, though: until he met Meredith he had not dared to acknowledge this part of his nature at all.

Acknowledging it did not bring him much happiness, it seems. He stayed shy and frustrated, would glance wistfully after workmen and burly bargees, loiter in public lavatories, and comfort himself with long erotic day-dreams. Fear of blackmail haunted him – with reason, for the forces of purity were strong and underhand. One day at the Savile Club he happened to say something about a 'charming boy', and noticed a member staring at him: later, when he went to have his hair cut, the barber hinted that he would like a loan of £10. Then there was the incident of Ernest Merz. Forster and Merz, a King's contemporary, walked home together one night in 1909. What passed between them isn't known, but next morning Merz was found hanging in his rooms. He must, Forster explained to a friend, have been 'insulted disgustingly' by someone.

Telling his love was inevitably an ordeal, for contempt and abuse might lie behind every friendly face. He went through agonies after he had blurted out his passion to Syed Ross Masood, a dashing young Indian whom he coached in Latin and lusted after for years. Luckily Masood gave him the gentlest of brush-offs, and they stayed friends. His allure drew Forster to India in 1912, and with an account of the blazing, bewildering spaces he found there (along with Godbole and Chandrapore and the courtroom *punkah*-boy and the Marabar Caves – 'not all that remarkable', he said), Mr Furbank's narrative ends. Masood put the idea of a book about India into his head, crediting him with an uncanny grasp of the oriental soul. Besides, Forster perceived in Masood's anecdotes a new angle for attack on the British character. Masood used to tell how he had been relaxing in a railway compartment when a British officer bounded in shouting, 'Come on! get out of this.' 'D'you want your head knocked off?' inquired Masood: whereupon the officer exclaimed, 'I say, I'm awfully sorry! I didn't know you were that sort of person.'

Whether, apart from bringing Masood into his life, Forster's homosexuality advantaged him as a writer, it's hard to decide. Arguably it helped him to the isolation a satirist needs. On the other hand, it made him fed up with the kind of book he had been producing. Analysing the causes of his sterility in 1911, he put high on the list: 'Weariness of the only subject that I both can and may treat – the love of men for women and vice versa.' Further, homosexuality took him in an unfortunate way because it made him sentimental. When he approaches it as an author, the stringency drips out of him, and a fearsome cheeriness supervenes – witness the jinks the lovers get up to in *Maurice*: 'Maurice smote him on the ribs, and for ten minutes they played up amongst the trees, too silly for speech.' Quite so. Perhaps it would have been better for the novels if he had never found out about sex at all.

Of Mr Furbank's biography one can say, with confidence, that it won't be surpassed.

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Forster himself invited him to write it. It draws on all the available diaries and correspondence, as well as on innumerable conversations. Graceful, intimate, evocative, it is that rare thing, a study of a major writer by a major critic who was also a close friend. We shall not be brought so near to the young Forster again.

Geoffrey Grigson

Esteem Power

Meetings with Pasternak by ALEXANDER GLADKOV translated by Max Hayward *Collins Harvill* £4.95

When Pasternak is speaking, this book is wonderful. But first, though with real gratitude, we have to get rid of Alexander Gladkov, who is the tape-recorder – on tapes too gapped and too short. This dramatist (he died last year) revered Pasternak for his poems, his wisdom, and his character. Pasternak's poems hit him when he was a schoolboy, he met Pasternak first in 1936, and then he ran into him many times in the remaining years of Pasternak's life, most frequently in the war winter of 1941 and 1942, when with other members of the Writers' Union the young Gladkov and the middle-aged Pasternak had been evacuated to Chistopol, a small frozen river port 500 miles east of Moscow.

Gladkov reminisces, for all his devotion, in rather a skimpy way. Pasternak is handsome. Pasternak has white teeth, and one tooth is missing in front. Pasternak's voice, when he reads his poems, has a 'deep nasal timbre' and he draws out his vowels. He looks young, always young, for his age, even if his hair, every time they meet, shows a little more grey. About other writers he is given to praise, or else to saying nothing about them. Although he is gauche on some public occasions, he is 'graceful, benevolent, trusting, absorbed in himself and his work'.

Gladkov does go on. He goes on about Pasternak liking him, and giving him signed copies, and praising his musical comedy. He has to pad, I suppose, to fill out even a *samizdat* manuscript, which was to go the clandestine rounds (this is translated from a Paris edition of the manuscript). Still, Gladkov's touches of description add to the idea we already have of a decidedly and splendidly Superior Person. We see a little more of a man who trusts in his egotism, a man both modest vis-à-vis history and life and sure of his own worth. Gladkov once discussed Pasternak's blend of modesty and pride with the Russian critic Grigori Vinokur, a very intelligent man, we are told, who knew and admired Pasternak. 'I am never sure,' Vinokur said, 'where modesty ends and supreme self-esteem begins.'

There is nice self-assurance in Gladkov's best story about Pasternak. To the Theatre Association in Moscow, in 1943, he gave a reading of his new translation of *Antony and Cleopatra*, and at the end of the scene in which Enobarbus tells the story of Cleopatra and her love for Antony, the audience interrupted with sudden applause. Pasternak smiled, took off his glasses, gave 'a rather awkward little bow', and said, 'Just wait – it gets even better.' Everybody laughed, and Pasternak laughed, then put his glasses on again and continued the reading.

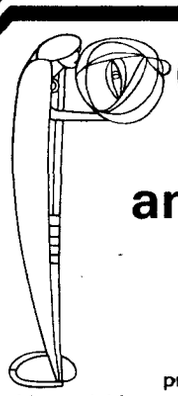
A charming story of that self-esteem. But then Pasternak always demanded, and seems usually to have exacted, the best from himself, which was his justification; and charm deepens into something else when Pasternak is allowed to speak for himself – when the table-talk begins, and when Gladkov isn't describing Pasternak's funeral or telling us why he has a low opinion, after all, of *Doctor Zhivago*.

Pasternak was at all times – if the listener was sympathetic – ready to pronounce, aphoristically and seriously. Out come the convictions:

> The first mark of talent is boldness . . . boldness in the presence of a blank sheet of paper.
>
> Nothing is more spurious than outer freedom if one lacks inner freedom.
>
> A genius is a qualitative extension of a mankind which is homogeneous in quality. The distance separating a genius from an ordinary man is imaginary, or rather non-existent, but this supposedly intervening space is crowded with all those 'fascinating' people who make a point of letting their hair grow long and wearing velvet jackets. It is these – if one grants that they have any place at all in history – who embody the concept of mediocrity.
>
> Truth has need of few words.
>
> I have to work every day, or I feel ashamed of myself.
>
> I saw it as my task [against the 'easy vi... ries of travelling stage performances', as nugatory in Russia as they are in England] to revive the idea of poetry, printed in books, on pages which speak with the power of deafening silence.

And so on. We don't have to agree, supinely, with every aphorism which is pronounced with austerity and authority; but it is sensible to consider them, and to be provoked by them, and, if we dissent, to justify our disagreement with them. They do not need to be original, but our need is to relate them to the speaker. And really, in the way of criticism, poetry-criticism, I cannot believe there is anything which energises and enlightens us more than poetry-talk of that kind – by Jonson, Goethe, Coleridge, Novalis, Hopkins (in his letters), Valéry, Eliot (bedded circumspectly in his essays), Auden; or Pasternak. Few poets try it without a well-founded conviction of their right.

I realise that Pasternak's obiter dicta may put him far out of fashion in either of two present circumstances, the circumstance of an excessively idle and spineless poetry (but then poetry is always in such a condition) and the circumstance of more and more book-length criticism, English as well as American, which is remote from everything palpable, sensual and structural in poems. But like Pasternak ('memory is history, and memory is art . . . art is really crystallised out of chaos'), each poet ought to see in himself history continued, and not history



CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH
and the Modern Movement
THOMAS HOWARTH

The first edition of **Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement** by Thomas Howarth (1952) is universally recognised as the definitive text and has long been out of print. Since that time interest in his work has grown considerably and his reputation increased greatly. We have now reissued the book in a splendid edition which includes a substantial new introduction by Professor Howarth bringing the Mackintosh story up to date. New bibliographical material has been added and the chronological table of events has been enlarged and reset. Altogether a magnificent, timely contribution to the history of British architecture. *9¾ x 7½ ins, 386pp 96 plates* £16.50

The Sleep Instinct
RAY MEDDIS

Most of us believe that we sleep in order to rest our tired bodies and minds. Ray Meddis challenges this view and argues that sleep may no longer serve any important function in modern man. Hugh Freeman writes in the *Daily Telegraph:* 'The questions asked here are so fundamental that they simply cannot be ignored — whether one is professionally concerned with sleep problems or simply trying to get to sleep.' £4.50

Routledge & Kegan Paul
39 Store Street, London WC1

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abandoned with contempt or carelessness. 'History is life's answer to the challenge of death,' says Pasternak.

Even if he has (like myself) no Russian, each poet, each reader, can be helped by meeting Pasternak where it is possible, as in this book, and even more in Pasternak's *Letters to Georgian Friends*, which I read through in David Magarshack's translation three or four times every year. From the *Letters* I always remember, not without shame, Pasternak talking of 'the whole world of self-sacrifice and hard work, which I know so well and to the service of which I am devoted'. Then he adds, 'I saw something in life which had some connection with great men.'

> Snow swept over the earth,
> Swept it from end to end,
> The candle on the table burned,
> The candle burned –

We may see in life much that had some connection with Pasternak.

Robin Blackburn

Saneamento

The Portuguese Armed Forces and the Revolution by DOUGLAS PORCH *Croom Helm* £7.95

In the two years following April 1974 the majority of Portuguese established that they saw their country as part of Europe, rejecting the overseas destiny still dreamt of by Spinola and the Third World romanticism of the radical wing of the Armed Forces Movement (MFA). Europe seemed to promise higher living standards, a guarantee of new-found freedoms and, above all, civilian government. The Socialist Party (PSP) emerged as the temporary victor in 1976 partly because it successfully identified with the popular longing to rejoin Europe after half a century of enforced isolation and quarantine. The PSP also succeeded in reflecting the spontaneous anti-capitalism bred by decades of bourgeois intimacy with fascism.

Much has been written about Euro-Communism; the dazzling performance of its cousin, Euro-Socialism, has yet to be properly acknowledged and explained. In Portugal, Spain and France at least, Euro-Socialism has outpaced its rivals, though so far the doctrine shows no signs of crossing the Channel. The Euro-Socialist Parties are very new, though their names are very old. Their symbols are still the red flag and the clenched fist, though now the fist holds a flower. They reject social democracy, Leninism and anarchism, but are content to be called Marxist. Their leaders proclaim adherence to both pluralism and orderly government. They favour workers' self-management as an ideal, and nationalisation as a policy, but are attentive to the financial counsel of Brussels and Washington. They delight in outflanking the communists on the Left; their successes reassure Schmidt if not Kissinger.

So far Euro-Socialism has flourished in opposition and its appeal may be more difficult to reconcile with government. During 1974-75 the PSP, though technically part of the Government, functioned as an opposition party for most of the time – indeed for many it seemed the only alternative to unending military tutelage. The real power lay with the MFA; the President was a military man and, apart from two months in 1974, so was the Prime Minister. This is why Douglas Porch's study of the political role of the Portuguese military is a useful addition to the sparse literature on events in Portugal. After sketching the historical and institutional background to the coup, Porch recounts the rise and fall of the remarkable radical military faction around Vasco Gonçalves, Prime Minister from July '74 to August '75, with its hopes for a Portuguese Socialism inaugurated by the alliance of the MFA with the *povo*, and inspired by the philosophy of Rousseau rather than that of Marx.

The author stitches together his account from interviews with officers who had little sympathy with the radicals from the outset. He is able to show how precarious the position of Gonçalves was within the army itself. Outside the armed forces Gonçalves could count on the Communist Party until almost the end, but because of the Stalinist sectarianism of this Party the alliance brought more enemies than friends. Porch traces the growing understanding between the moderate majority of military commanders and the PSP leader, Mario Soares, which preceded the downfall of Gonçalves. He argues that the red revolution, which many hoped or feared was imminent, was never more than a mirage, given the complexion of the military commanders and the popular following of the PSP. Porch happily concludes that the outcome was a triumph for Soares, the civilian politician who rallied to law and order, and for the professional military men, who knew when to retire to the barracks. Yet today the President is still a General, and he already seems to eclipse his Socialist Prime Minister. As for the Communist Party, it is thriving on opposition just as the PSP did before it.

Porch swallows neat what he is told by his officers and what he has read in the Soares memoirs. This leads him to miss the significance of the Socialists' failure to insist on a civilian president when they had the strength to do so. It also leads him to underplay and misrepresent the surge of revolt that swept factories, estates, schools, offices, and eventually the armed forces themselves, in the aftermath of April '74. In different ways the MFA, the Communists and the Socialists all acknowledged the anti-capitalist momentum of *saneamento*: removing from authority those complicit with Salazarism and handing over to the workers the monopolies and landed estates which had been pillars of the old regime. This uneven movement was dominant in the red belt from Lisbon to the Alentejo, but made no headway in the Northern countryside. It was weakened by the mutual provocations of Socialist and Communist leaders, and it was often disorientated by the far Left groups. The majority of the latter took their models of revolution from China, Korea or Cuba, and failed to respect the necessary pluralism of any genuinely revolutionary movement in European conditions.

For some, the Communists were simply 'social fascists', for others Euro-Socialism was simply the politics of the CIA. Direct experience made the manipulation of the former or demagogy of the latter easy to detest; less obvious was the fact that neither current could be banished by fiat from the movement without destroying its capacity to learn and grow. Factory committees and neighbourhood committees failed to develop an internal democratic life as political differences within them were suppressed. Yet despite confusions and divisions the populist revolutionary current was not a negligible factor; in the presidential elections Otelo de Carvalho, who broke with the military hierarchy to become its representative, obtained over 16 per cent of the votes. In fact this movement survived the Gonçalves debacle as the most original product of the Portuguese revolution, holding out both a warning and a promise to the rest of Europe as it moves into the uncharted waters of a new crisis, for which neither Euro-Communism nor Euro-Socialism is adequately prepared. Five hundred years ago, in the epoch of the Great Discoveries, the Portuguese explored and extended the limits of the known world; in the Seventies they explored the limits of the political systems we know, making discoveries that have still to be mapped.

Arthur Hopcraft

Scorelines

The Name of the Game: Sport and Society by FRED INGLIS *Heinemann Educational* £4.95

Fred Inglis ran for the army and played rugby for Cambridge, and now he is a 'cultural scientist' teaching at Bristol University. So when it comes to 'Sport and Society', which is the book's subtitle, Mr Inglis ought to know the name of the game, one feels; and even what the score is. He sets himself (and the reader) a daunting task, declaring at the outset:

> . . . this book has its determinedly intellectual bent. Indeed, it seeks to tie a knot between intellectual and popular life, of a kind placed under impossible and mostly breaking strain by the separateness of our giant social institutions – the great transit camps of the universities and schools, the blank unmeaning of everyday work. To put the intellect back in the fields is a great ambition, and only great men have really brought it off. William Morris, John Ruskin, T. H. Green, are the Victorian heroes I would copy in this.

One can only cheer him on. If sometimes his writing creates entanglement rather than density, it can also, sometimes, be vivid, moving and penetrative. He clearly loves sport: not merely enjoys it, but has the embedded concern for its blemishes and wounds and exploitation that makes joy in

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its excellence all the more rapturous. He is not afraid to show his rapture, frequently pointing to the sensuality in sport, both for players and watchers: the packed musculature in the mass start of a cross-country run, which might to many people appear a breathless muddle, is perhaps the most surprising example.

But his descriptive effulgences – he warns his readers he may not escape vulgarity – do not delay him long from his solemn purpose, a critique of sport's usage, abusage, reportage and tutelage. I cannot pretend I wholly follow Mr Inglis in his intensely delving discursus. Take the word, 'meanings'. He says that when he uses it,

> I intend those shared concentrations of value in life which people naturally understand in the language they share, and this sharing is identical with the entirely unassuming encounter implicit in meaning anything at all by the words we use.

Apparently F. R. Leavis has encouraged him to take that view, although one feels Mr Inglis is being too modest here and should claim the credit entirely. He has much more to say of the same kind, and it makes the book seem much more substantial – by which I intend longer – than its 200 pages. But in its three meatiest chapters there is a good deal of intelligence and vigour in his comments on the way journalists and broadcasters, novelists and film-makers present sport to its public, the way the public receives the images, and what effect the image-making has on the subjects. 'The strange case of George Best' gets some detailed attention; properly, since Best fits so well Mr Inglis's picture of the sporting star as both hero and victim of a public that *needs* him to succeed and then fail. But why does Mr Inglis not mention that Best drank a lot? It is no secret now, and it is very relevant in considering the harsh way the media treated him – forcing him out of work for two years, as Mr Inglis puts it, hardly accurately. Best was not crushed by the media, but by the intolerable demands of his talent. That is a much sadder, and more significant, story than the résumé of the Best affair given here.

Pronouncing on reporters, authors and film people, Mr Inglis is unenthusiastic about much of their work on sport. He is right, of course, about the banality, the trivialising, the hateful condescension, which come from too many typewriters and talking (or screaming) heads on the TV screen. He says he is not sure how much Desmond Hackett and David Coleman have actually conditioned people's attitudes. I think the answer may be that they please and irritate much as other entertainers, including sportsmen, do. They don't, of course, satisfy as the best sportsmen can.

Mr Inglis is thrifty with commendations: Neville Cardus, John Arlott, Chris Brasher, Danny Blanchflower, Ernest Hemingway, Michael Davie, Brian Glanville – and David Storey, for his novel about a Rugby League player, *This Sporting Life*, in which are to be found 'truthfulness and ardour' among many other merits. If one finds Storey's writing clumsy and precious – admittedly a distinctive combination – Mr Inglis's judgments become highly arguable. But then he has inevitably written that kind of book by approaching sport at all.

Thomas M. Disch

Stay Hungry

Syndromes of the Seventies: Population, Sex and Social Change by JOHN A. LORAINE *Peter Owen* £6

Over-population is of all political topics the most difficult to discuss to any purpose, since it is invariably somebody else's over-population one is concerned with – not yours nor mine but a Third World's. How does one convey to the average Bolivian the degree of one's rational alarm about over-population without suggesting that he is a member of that over-population? Without, that is, calling his existence into question? On the whole, the over-populated prefer to consider themselves the under-privileged, and their political programmes are aimed at reallocating resources rather than reducing their own numbers.

For this reason books on the 'population problem' seem inevitably to be preaching to the converted. They are best judged, therefore, as other such sermons are, by formal criteria. Judged so, *Syndromes of the Seventies* can only be called bromidic, a jeremiad as wanting in vigour of expression as in clarity of outline and incisiveness of thought. Its only redeeming virtue is an occasional quirky aside, as when Dr Loraine, a noted endocrinologist, remarks,

> I find it quite gratifying that gonadotrophins are such a focus of interest in the Seventies. I have always had a great affection for these hormones because they were the first substances on which I worked as a young researcher in the dim and distant days of the Forties –

or when he produces one of his charmingly inapposite statistics, such as his observation that the total number of births in 1977 over the whole world is 'four times the number of people currently driving Volkswagen cars'. The general effect is as though one of Chekhov's elderly *flâneurs* were to deliver a four-act monologue on themes that had agitated him while reading that morning's newspaper. He gets it all in: the energy crisis, women's lib, nuclear safety, and much else – all, doubtless, agitating themes, though readers wishing to be reconfirmed in their faith would do better to turn to authors with more of a revival-meeting style; to Robert Heilbroner, for instance, or Paul Ehrlich.

Dr Loraine, despite his affection for gonadotrophins and other hormones, makes only the feeblest attempt to span the wide discursive gap between endocrinology and demography, and so, unfortunately, the promise of his book's subtitle is never fulfilled. A pity, since this is precisely the uncharted territory where a solution to the population problem might be expected to be found, or, failing that, at least an illuminating analysis of the coming global debacle. Similarly, one might expect in a book that provides an eyewitness account of the 1974 World Population Conference in Bucharest something more than quick synopses of the various wrong-headed views of its Third World participants. Newspapers suffice for that. Surely it would not be out of place to conjecture as to the political motives that have led such diverse governments as those of China, Argentina, the Vatican *et al* to resist so strenuously the simple logic of Malthus. Assuming that they are not utter fools and that their official statements are hypocrisies, is their intention to stock their arsenals with cannon fodder, or do they only wish to secure a supply of cheap, wretched and governable labour? Such speculations never darken the thoughts of Dr Loraine, whose view of the clouds gathering on the horizon is that of a watercolour painter rather than a meteorologist.

As population levels continue to mount, it becomes ever more inevitable that one of the three classic Malthusian remedies will come into effect. If a global-scale nuclear war is avoided, then famine and plague can be depended on, and these will probably fall to the portion of the Third World. The problem then arises – will *we* try to help? Will we help anyone who is in need, or only those who seem to have a long-term chance of survival? Only in the Seventies, with the advent of the concept of 'triage', or 'aid optimisation', have such dismal contingencies begun to emerge from the realm of the unthinkable. Strangely, since the notion originates in Dr Loraine's own field of medicine, there is no discussion of triage in his book. He does, indeed,

SUPERNATURAL

In **The Supernatural Short Stories of Sir Walter Scott** (£5.25), as with its companion volume **The Supernatural Short Stories of R. L. Stevenson** (£4.95), Michael Hayes has brought together all this great author's spine-chillers, including the masterly *Wandering Willie's Tale.*

MUSIC & OPERA

Wagner the Dramatist, by H. F. Garten, explores the background material to show how history, legend and folklore were all transformed into the theatrical mythology of Wagner's operas, (Illus. £5.95). Also available, the long awaited **Memories of the Opera** by Giulio Gatti-Casazza, covering his turbulent times as director of *La Scala* and the New York *'Met'* (£9.50 illus.), and after years out of print Ernest Newman's witty and erudite **Essays from the World of Music** (Vol. 1 £6.50 & £2.25, Vol. 2 £7.50 & £2.50).

POLITICS

Arthur Cyr's **Liberal Party Politics in Britain** (£9.95) is a fascinating study of the modern Liberal Party that charts its history and the development of its thinking under Clement Davies, Jo Grimmond and Jeremy Thorpe, bringing us up to the David Steel era. Two other important titles in the PLATFORM BOOKS series are **Inflation,** an analysis of past and present inflations and possible solutions by John Pardoe, Michael Jefferson, Walt Rostow, Thomas Mann and A. D. White, (£5.95 & £2.25) and **Innovation** by William Kingston, an original study of creativity in industry, art and science. (£5.95).

THEATRE

GAMBIT No 30 *International Theatre Magazine.* This 'French Theatre Issue' contains texts by Jean-Louis Barrault on the theatre of Paul Claudel, two complete plays by Fernando Arrabal and Hélène Cixous, an extract from Harold Hobson's new book **French Theatre Since 1830,** as well as articles and reviews. (£1.25: Subscription £4.50 ($11) for four issues.)

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devote a chapter to the advocacy of what he calls a 'sustainable society', and while he admits, in passing, that this is not a feasible goal in the underdeveloped nations, he shrinks from pointing out why self-sufficiency must be a central priority for countries like Japan and England, which are reliant on imported food and on foreign markets for their manufactures. A most unviable position when the crunch comes.

Till that time it is doubtful that very much will be done by way of reaching the ideal of self-sufficiency. Those who are aware of the problem can do little more than, like Dr Loraine, talk about it – the futility of which he evokes most poignantly:

> I had been much involved in the arrangements for Population Day. I travelled frequently to London to attend meetings of the National Committee; I wrote several articles; the media in Scotland seemed to look with favour on what I had to say. On Population Day in Edinburgh some 500 people participated in a march along Princes Street and presented a petition to the Secretary of State for Scotland . . . It was fortunate that Population Day was staged in 1973. Thereafter such an event would have seemed increasingly inappropriate. For, as the Seventies wore on, fertility in Britain continued to decline . . .

Over to you, Bolivia.

Paul Johnson

He-Man

Mr and Mrs Gladstone: An Intimate Biography by JOYCE MARLOWE *Weidenfeld* £6.95

It was an excellent idea to write a combined personal biography of the Gladstones, leaving out most of the politics but putting in the details of two remarkably full lives. Of course, much is still to come from the jealously protected Gladstone diaries – there may even be some shocks – but until they are out Joyce Marlowe's book will do. Gladstone's marriage was remarkably successful. Catherine Glynne was no great shakes as a hostess, particularly a political one – she was rather a scatty, Lady Dorothy Macmillan type – but in all other respects she was a match for her phenomenal husband. I am astonished to hear she had a heart condition. She struck most as a tough old bird, had eight children (with difficulty), at least one bad miscarriage, enjoyed the new style of mass campaigning Gladstone invented in the 1870s even more than he did, and lived practically for ever.

The Glynnes were old Welsh land, against the Gladstones' new Scotch cash. In fact as man and wife they were plagued with money worries, largely through her family's improvidence, and Gladstone reckoned he was 'the poorest man in the Carlton Gardens area'. He was mean, too, or perhaps merely prudent. Travelling third class to Naples was an eccentric thing for an English gentleman to do in the mid-19th century. He was also over-anxious not to abuse his official position (everyone else did, especially over free postage) and provoked his wife to such letters as:

> I will attend to your wishes with regard to not sending letters to you on private means through the official bag. I have never telegraphed through the Foreign Office at all & I paid 1s. for a wretched government telegram from Downing Street. It does seem funny that when writing to you from Downing Street I must put stamps on my letters. However your wish is law though I don't see it.

How much influence Catherine had over the GOM, or indeed the Grand Younger Man, is a matter for speculation. She was unsuccessful in opposing his resignation as Party leader in 1875, but as he soon came bounding back with the Bulgarian Horrors her arguments had doubtless made their point. Her main single contribution to his political life was to stand by him absolutely throughout the intermittent smear-campaigns against his sexual integrity kept up by the Queen, Disraeli and such harpies as the Duchess of Somerset and Lady Salisbury. Sexually, the GOM was no sinecure. He was a highly-sexed, highly emotional man for many decades, who early suffered agonies over masturbating, later read mild pornography and scourged himself for it (not unusual in mid-Victorian times: it was routine, for instance, at Cardinal Newman's Birmingham Oratory). His prowling with whores was harmless, I should say, about on a par with Lord Longford's consorting with Myra Hindley and Janie Jones. Lots of high-minded people did this; after all, there were an enormous number of whores in London, many of whom actually *did* want to be rescued. More difficult was Gladstone's unconcealed admiration for such society beauties as the Duchess of Sutherland and demi-mondaines like Laura Thistlethwayte (whom I suspect was Trollope's model for Lizzie Eustace in *The Eustace Diamonds*).

The truth is, Gladstone was a tremendous he-man, who kept his energies and appetites under control only by heroic self-discipline. One of his doctors testified that his bodily physique was the finest he had ever come across and, apart from failing eyesight and deafness, he remained in good trim to the end. Nor was he a prig, though it is possible, as Miss Marlowe speculates, that he might have become one had he not married Catherine. Emily Eden commented: 'If he were soaked in boiling water and rinsed till he was twisted into rope, I do not suppose a drop of fun would come out of him.' Many who, like Miss Eden, did not really know him believed this; but it was quite untrue. He had much more fun than the languid and almost impotent Disraeli, and not the least of his habits was to drink a pint of champagne in the evening. He might be austere with himself but he did not condemn luxury in others. When John Ruskin accused him of being a leveller, he replied:

> Oh dear no! I am nothing of the sort. I am a firm believer in the aristocratic principle – the rule of the best. I am an out-and-out *inequalitarian*.

A. J. Balfour got it about right: 'A conservative in everything except essentials.'

There are a number of unimportant errors in Miss Marlowe's entertaining book. Thus, surely Gladstone chewed each mouthful of food 39, not 32 times, or so we were always taught. And Rosebery did not spend £50,000 on the Midlothian campaigns. But a few slips are forgivable, since Miss Marlowe tells us so much, and so much that is new, at least to me. I knew that Gladstone had blown off the forefinger of his left hand, but did not realise that he did it while cleaning a loaded gun – so even W. E. Homer nodded. Also new to me was the fact that the GOM was tossed, gored and nearly killed by a Welsh cow in August 1892. Characteristically, he did not tell his wife of the episode until after dinner, and was more impressed by the fortitude with which she received the news than by his own resilience (Catherine grimly told the Queen, 'The cow has been shot').

One of the impressive things about Gladstone is that nearly every tiny item about him seems interesting. We still do not know whether he spoke with a broad Lancashire accent to his dying day, because statements to this effect are belied by one scratchy Edison recording. Miss Marlowe says he flatly refused to use the telephone, in contrast to his opponent Salisbury, who adored electrical gadgets (and how Disraeli, had he lived longer, would have loved that gossipy invention; converted the Queen to it, no doubt). Gladstone, however, got a great deal out of life, without ever forgetting what it was really about. Miss Marlowe ends with his fine words to a group of schoolboys in 1877:

> Be inspired with the belief that life is a great and noble calling; not a mean and grovelling thing that we are to shuffle through as we can, but an elevated and lofty destiny.

Ritchie Calder

Playing Straight

Towards Tomorrow by FENNER BROCKWAY *Hart-Davis, MacGibbon* £8.50

Fenner should have called this autobiography *My First 89 Years*. He is still batting vigorously and the verve of this interim report promises a longer innings. This is no slippered pantaloon, drooling at the pen. Every sitting day of the House of Lords, this sprightly near-nonagenarian is in his place, harrying the Front Bench 'While thanking my noble friend, the Minister, for that reply, would he not agree that . . . ?' Wham! Ouch! He is the master of the supplementary. As one Leader of the House said ruefully: 'We should pay Fenner Brockway £10,000 a year *not* to ask questions. In terms of man-hours of senior civil servants and ministers, it would be cheaper.' His constituency is the world and his 'surgery' in the Guest Room of the House of Lords brings constituents of every colour and every clime.

Towards Tomorrow shows why. In his lifetime Fenner has spanned the history of the British Labour Movement; and while his autobiography has been going through

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the press he has written another book, stretching back to the Levellers, the Agitators, and the Diggers of Cromwellian times. One would be hard put to think of anyone in the Labour movement whom he has not known intimately, worked with and, yes, sometimes quarrelled with, but whom he here recalls without rancour. This is no name-dropping exercise. What he has to say about Keir Hardie, the Pankhursts, Bernard Shaw, George Orwell, Oswald Mosley, John Stonehouse, and every Labour PM from Ramsay MacDonald to Jim Callaghan is about working relationships, and is rounded off with shrewd and tolerant assessments.

That is what distinguishes this autobiography from other recent ones: there are no sensational disclosures; no keyhole revelations; no paying off old scores (and Brockway had more scores than most); and no lamentations. That does not mean it is not forthright – on the contrary; but it has a sense of perspective. Rationalisation of this kind can be dull but not from an adroit reporter like Fenner Brockway.

Typical (and, for me, very moving) is his account of his years in prison in the first world war as a conscientious objector. He was in Pentonville when Roger Casement was led out to execution and in Lincoln when De Valera escaped, with Fenner shouting from his cell above the whistles and the bangings: 'You won't catch him.' He tells of his periods in solitary (he was the indomitable rebel, producing a prison newspaper on toilet paper and organising a revolt against the Silence Rule); of his maltreatment, which partly paralysed a leg; and the callousness of those in authority. Four months after the end of the war he was released. There is even a chuckle in the writing when he describes how a few weeks later he got a War Office letter saying he had been discharged from the army and that if he ever attempted to join the forces in future he would be subject to two years imprisonment.

His account of the rousing days of the ILP, when he was Secretary, makes one wistful for that flesh-and-blood socialism – often, as he admits, simplistic, ill-managed politically, weak on theory (but so were the theorists), bedevilled by personalities; but concerned about people. While confronting political mistakes, including his own, his main self-reproach is his official involvement in displacing H. N. Brailsford as editor of the *New Leader*. He gives fresh insights in his accounts of the break with the Labour Party, the New Party, the Socialist League, his change of heart, as a life-long pacifist, over fascism, his direct involvement in the Spanish Civil War, his post-war involvement with Keep Left and the Bevanites, of CND and his heartbreak over Nye as the Lost Leader.

Always anti-Imperialist, Fenner, in the Bevanite days, made colonial affairs his major concern. His stories of the sorties he made into Africa with Leslie Hale are fascinating. For the Samson who rocked the pillars of Empire, he is clear-sighted about the consequences. His evaluations of personalities and predicaments – in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean – are frank and from direct experience. Paradoxically, his last chapter is called 'Unfulfilled'.

Tom Paulin

Captain Fist

October Light by JOHN GARDNER *Cape* £4.95
The House of Christina by BENN HAAS *Peter Davies* £4.50
Proxopera by BENEDICT KIELY *Gollancz* £2.95
Nelly's Version by EVA FIGES *Secker & Warburg* £3.90

Better a novel that tells two stories than the more usual portrait of the artist as artist. John Gardner's witty Bicentennial satire sets a Robert Frostish story, rooted in Vermont, of the antagonism between an ageing brother and sister against a hilarious, rootless Californian fantasy called *The Smugglers of Lost Soul's Rock* – a Kierkegaard-quoting pulp novel with missing pages which an old widow called Sarah Abbott is reading while locked in her bedroom in her brother's farmhouse. Both narratives hark back to the origins of the Republic and also explore its contemporary situation in what is a comically Blakean vision of a fissured national psyche. James Page isn't simply a homespun wiseacre – the history-as-myth (tales of Washington, Franklin and Samuel Adams) which he hands down to his grandson isn't 'mere New England piss and vinegar', for he represents the difficult virtues of a traditional America which consorts weirdly with what is now and nowhere. This cantankerous farmer

> hated the Snoopy in his grandson's lap, hated Coca-Cola and the State of California, which he'd never seen, hated foreign cars which he identified with weightless luxury and 'the Axis', hated foam rubber, TV dinners, and store-bought ice cream.

While he quarrels with his sister and neighbours, Captain Fist and his band of smugglers sail the *Indomitable* to collect a cargo of dope. The starter-wires of their boat are 'as thickly intrinsicate as congressional by-laws' – the ship of state carries a ton of cannabis, its crew is high on freedom, and the dangerous Captain Fist, who has sold his soul to the devil, is a deviously intelligent amalgam of Faustus, Captain Ahab and Richard Nixon. The visionary symbolism exposes the cruel tyranny of absolute freedom – i.e., a state founded on that idea – and satirises a republican rhetoric which asserts: 'We must find our way back to authentic emotion, back to the Spirit that carried our forefathers through Valley Forge and the Battle of the Marne, and Okinawa!' This is a brilliantly imaginative novel, whose comic pessimism negates both the foundations and surfaces of American society.

A similar, though unexamined, American idea of freedom is fundamental to Ben Haas's ambitious account of Austria under the Nazis. Initially, the firm characterisation and the deep knowledge of Viennese society promise an objective story of private lives caught in the sinister politics of Central Europe. Haas's evident fascination with Austria, and with the dark, mysterious woods round Vienna, provides a convincing background, but gradually an unacknowledged fantasy begins to break through – not a conscious fantasy of freedom-loving drug smugglers, but a typically romantic idea of the influence which the heroic individual can exert upon the most brutal political events.

Lan Condon – an American, like Haas, but easily the least convincing character in the story – is first expelled from Austria by the Nazis, and later drives into Vienna with the Russian army to be reunited with his blonde and beautiful Austrian wife. Condon is a disenchanted Hollywood scriptwriter, and yet the last paragraph could come from any bad film: 'Much of the dream had vanished, but there was enough left, enough to build on. There had to be.' The story is deeply sentimental – 'reality' has 'bony elbows' or strikes 'like a fist', and in case the 'arresting splendor' of Vienna should prove too attractive we're reminded that we 'must not let the charm ever mask the guilt, the music drown out the screams'. A pity, for Haas shows an impressive narrative skill, even if he doesn't get much beyond a John Wayne in the Wienerwald scenario.

Benedict Kiely's novella deals with the sinister politics of Ulster. His title, *Proxopera*, derives from the terrorist tactic of having bombs delivered by proxy – in this case by a retired Tyrone schoolmaster called Binchey. The story, which is mediated through Binchey's consciousness as he drives into town with the bomb, deftly manages to be both mellow and tense. The landscape of a 'well-planted presbyterian countryside' is lovingly and accurately evoked; but perhaps too warmly, for the large white farmhouse Binchey envied as a child and which he now owns is misleadingly, but inescapably, reminiscent of Stormont. This confusion is abetted by the way Kiely's proper indignation at terrorism falls back on reminiscences of 'the last 50 years' and pushes half a century of bigotry and stupidity into a static rural nostalgia. However unfortunate the case, no imaginative account of the desperate politics of Ireland can identify itself with the Alliance Party.

Eva Figes's problem is not that her analysis is wrong, but that it is embodied in a way which is doctrinaire to the point of almost total fatuity. What could have been either a promising story, on the lines of Brian Moore's *The Doctor's Wife*, of a middle-aged woman's realisation of the way her husband has destroyed her personality, or else a bitterly objective satire on marriage, becomes a glum, clumsy, naïve and snobbish piece of badly-written self-indulgence. Closing the door of a hotel room a woman who calls herself Mrs Dean is 'alone, with myself, a stranger'; and 'like a young girl about to undergo her first rape, I could not believe I would be disappointed'. A bizarre and foolish comparison. Worse still, we are introduced to 'a woman who had reproduced within the decade' and to one who speaks 'in the tone of a woman who might not have had the benefit of a higher education but did listen to news broadcasts on occasion'. Imagined lives are elsewhere. *Nelly's Version* does not locate them.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Benedict Nightingale

A King in Mind

Henry VI *Stratford*

Well, I'm glad to have seen all three parts of *Henry VI*, and not only because they allow me the pigmy satisfaction of patronising Shakespeare for his apprentice errors. The verse is all iambic plod, as if the language were being drilled up and down by a sergeant-major with a mind like a metronome, and the imagery is mostly decorative, quaint frills on the verbal khaki. Padding unashamedly aids the scansion, as in 'golden crown', 'regal crown', 'glorious crown', or (ugh) 'golden circuit', when 'crown' alone would do. Then again, the trilogy's view of pre-Tudor history is pretty crude, its reverence for English imperialism much more unreserved and unsophisticated than that of *Henry V*, which seems chauvinistic enough to us nowadays. Talbot, the flayer of France, is the essence of bluff integrity, and Joan of Arc a witch, slut and snob, capable of spitting in her own father's face before being lugged off to a well-merited frying. It was this particular travesty, by the way, that provoked Shaw to write *St Joan*: the original idea was to show Shakespeare, all embarrassed by the 'piffling libel' he'd perpetrated, scuttling down the back-streets of Heaven in order to avoid meeting the heroine.

So one might go on. So my own mind *did* go on at Stratford, as Part Three cranked remorselessly through the Wars of the Roses, its pattern increasingly predictable. On come the combatants and abuse each other, reserving special bile for whichever character has last swapped sides. Then they fight, with due deference to the odd convention by which the leaders always run across one another in the hurly-burly of the battlefield and end up swiping away in single combat. Then the victors come on and rejoice, followed by the vanquished, who lament. And then it all begins again, a gift for the bardophobe and parodist:

> Thou traitor Slough, hast thou with Stevenage,
> Vile Milton Keynes and basest Basildon,
> Slain Skelmersdale New Town, that lovely prince,
> The fairest flower of northern overspill?

And yet Shakespeare himself is somewhere in there, feeling out his strength, biding his time. Only he could suddenly light up the numb proceedings with a phrase like 'dogged York that reaches at the moon', or bring on an army extra to ask for 'worship and quietness – I like it better than a dangerous honour'. The hapless, helpless victims of other people's quarrels have his undivided compassion: witness, in particular, that curious, liturgical scene shared by a meditative Henry VI, a 'son that has killed his father', and a 'father that has killed his son'. Even horrid Joan is momentarily permitted lines sympathetic to the anguish of mangled France. In short, there's much in the trilogy that's embryonically Shakespearian, and some that's more maturely so: the energy and dash of the prose passages involving mad Jack Cade, who thinks literacy suspect and the erection of a grammar school a hanging offence; the emergence of the future Richard III from the glumly anonymous barons, incisors flaring as he promises to 'slay more gazers than the basilisk'.

Paralysing though it may sometimes be to ears and rump alike, the play is extraordinary in its sweep and scope, its trifold attempt, so near the birth of our drama, to chronicle a controversial era, propagate a moral view of history, and individualise some of the participants; and no theatrical partnership is better fitted to cope with such aspirations than the one ensconced at Stratford. The RSC knows how to inject variety into the seemingly null, and Terry Hands is the house director most adept at handling formal verse and pell-mell event, a stylised, busy narrative. His battles are rather strained and samey, a drab ritual of metallic slap and tickle. But otherwise his production is brisk and comprehensible, and more visually riveting than one might have expected, considering that the fair city of St Albans is reduced to parallel red ropes on a tufty stage sward, and great palaces to a set of benches and a throne seemingly tacked together by a carpenter whose supply of wood ran out before he could finish the back.

The three plays, for all their lurches, emerge as a consistent whole – or, rather, consistent three-quarters, since the RSC is playing them in tandem with its already-celebrated *Henry V* instead of the more logical *Richard III*, which reconciles York and Lancaster in the utopian person of Henry VII. And this is achieved without that editorialising, moralising touch which has sometimes spoiled promising productions at Stratford. There were even times when Hands might have felt freer to stress a point or line, for instance in that strange, suggestive scene when the assembled nobility twits the con-man who claims to have been magically cured of blindness, and his wife gives her distinctively Shakespearian riposte: 'Alas, we did it for pure need.' But he restrains himself, leaving us to note for ourselves the contrast between the artificiality of the speech and the atrocity of the action, between the claims the characters make for their chivalry, honour, piety and concern for the commonweal and the violence of their ambition and their indifference to its after-effects, and whatever other generalities lurk beneath the play's skin, easy prey for theme-spotters.

The challenge that the trilogy offers the players – how to animate character rather stony by Shakespeare's later standards – is decisively answered by Emrys James, whose York minces about in an ecstasy of narcissism, fastidiously sniffing his white rose, and by Helen Mirren, whose Margaret is less harridan than deviant sexpot, never more intimate and loving than when a murder is rising to its climax. Julian Glover is a brusque Warwick, so much the kingmaker that he treats the crown like a frisbee, and actually whisks it from claimant to claimant; Charlotte Cornwell makes a frolicsome Joan, her trademark a malicious and finally demented cackle; and there's a high-voltage Crookback from Anton Lesser, a young actor of rare range and authority. But it's Alan Howard's Henry who does most to bind the trilogy together: his, if anyone's, are the moral binoculars with which we peer at the black events unrolling below.

It's not an easy part, but he negotiates the obvious dangers. Here's no weedy curate promoted above his station, pi, namby-pamby and dull. Rather, he's a sensitive, conscientious and intellectually avaricious man thrust by fortune into the wrong era and job, a born scrabble-player doomed to umpire medieval rollerball. At first his fractious nobles puzzle and pain him, but by the end he finds them almost amusing: their shenanigans are so easy to see through, and matter so much less than they suppose. He dies smiling, or trying to, a tattered, white-haired preview of the regenerate Lear. As he pointedly remarks, he may be an ineffective ruler, but he's 'a king in mind, and that's enough'. Altogether, Mr Howard has brought off a perilous feat, not only to represent an unsentimental, unpretentious virtue, but to show it developing, maturing, deepening. It's a fine performance, and one that tends to prove, by the substance and resonance it slowly and inconspicuously achieves, that the probationer who patched together both part and play was, after all, our Shakespeare.

Opera

Eric Sams

Kicks

The Ice Break *Covent Garden; further performance 26 July*

Sir Michael Tippett's title for his fourth and last opera, *The Ice Break* (i.e. when it's springtime in the tundras), offers an effective symbol for due changes and new departures. So does its opening scene, an international airport. But then comes an impulse to duck and scatter as we hear over our heads the familiar drone of the composer's highflown libretto trying so hard to get down to earth that it crash-lands in flat and flagrant cliché. 'You mother-fucking bastard . . . land him one on the jaw', and

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so on; the style is outspokenly outmoded, like a gin-crazed great-aunt.

Duck again; here comes the story. Lev is flying in ('like a bird', in a typical winged phrase) after '20 years of camp'. He seems all set for another 20. For a start he is still not cured of saying things like 'a frozen footcloth is the scarf that binds my face' – though not tightly enough to staunch the flow of pretentious quotation. Courageously awaiting him at the airport – a favourite meeting-place for stereotypes – is his wife Nadia. She sensibly left him and the homeland (guess where) years ago and took off for the new world with their baby son, Yuri. He's here too, but not to meet his father. Not he; not sullen and resentful Yuri, the student stereotype. He and his girl-type Gayle have come to hail the arrival of the black champion Olympion ('I am the greatest'), to whom Gayle 'offers herself' (cue for simulation). She is seeking in her own person to reverse the white role of overlord. ('I make amends' . . . 'Wow! this chick wants balling?') Instead she is savagely spurned; but then, she lives for kicks.

Meanwhile the mounting excitement has led to racial tensions. Mobs of blacks and whites defy each other and the Race Relations Act. Shouted slogans ('Whitey out . . . Burn, baby, burn') escalate to ritual slaughter (more simulation, this time of kicking to death, with heavy thuds and agonised screams). Olympion and Gayle are killed ('Bonny Gayle, gone out with the wind'). Yuri is gravely injured. The action is now mystically diversified with psychedelic trips and extraterrestrial visitations. But the astral arrival jeeringly disclaims divinity ('Saviour?! . . . Me!! You must be joking'). His message is presumably that we must be our own salvation. Nadia seeks hers by going into a rapid decline, no doubt bored to death by Lev's unremitting quotations. Under the care of Luke, a white doctor, and Hannah, a black nurse, the repulsive Yuri is reborn.

As I see it, this admittedly tendentious account fairly sums up the composer's own unfairness to his talents. His declared aim to show (a) the stereotypes and (b) their need for rebirth. But (a) is all-pervading; in the stock characters, in the leaden textual echoes (Eliot, Shaw, etc) and in the tabloid action (mob clashes as in *West Side Story*, entry of black gladiator as in *Carmen Jones*). With stereotypes stamped all over the stage, rebirth has to be confined to the orchestra-pit, where it is overlaid by the brashly brilliant design and production, and stifled by the clumsy libretto. There is certainly new life within the music, stirring in every sense, but it has to be brought out by the instruments rather than evoked by the voices.

Sometimes the scoring seems stripped to suggest naked vulnerability (as when Lev and Hannah silently seek mutual comfort at the end of Act II). Conversely there are spasmodic surges of regenerative power, with musical archetypes (not stereotypes) of rivers or crowds running amain or amok, in spate or in spite. Sometimes this duality seems thematically related; each is imagined as ambivalent – exhilarating as well as frightening. All the orchestral music is subtly shaded, and hence wholly at odds with the black-and-white conflict of the text.

This leads to difficulties or even impossibilities of interpretation, which understandably defeated most of the singers. The exceptions, I thought, were Heather Harper as Nadia, John Shirley-Quirk as Lev and Beverly Vaughn, whose Hannah has a touching quality of innocent empathy. The best interpretations of all, in my view (literally, from a side seat) came from the conductor, Colin Davis. The work is dedicated to him, as he manifestly is to it. Watching him, I could hear why; and this may help to identify its elusive essence. I often felt that I was hearing not operatic but symphonic music, with an inner emotive significance imagined by its composer (as also for example by Berlioz) in visual or verbal terms far fitter for printing on a score, or even showing on a screen, than being enacted as stage drama complete with chorus and choreography.

In opera properly so called, the music would readily have absorbed all these added components. In this production it just couldn't swallow them; and nor could I; and nor, I believe, will audiences generally. Under the surface glitter and the thick opacity of *The Ice Break* there is surely a deep undertow of warm feeling. But it will hardly be a long runner as an opera, though it may well be the forerunner of new and significant art-forms.

Football

Edward Pygge

Dhabi County

Scene: Hotel El Oil, Dubai. A roomful of Emirs and a man in a lucky blue suit.

Sheik Sultan Qasim: Ten thousand welcomes to my miserable hovel, Revie el Supremo. May the perspirations of your brow, if Allah wills, fall as pearls at your talented feet, O Educated Left Boot of Albion.

Revie: Sheik, Yon is the moon and I am over it. This is an offer I cannot refuse. If everything goes through OK it is an unbelievable opportunity to secure my family's future. By the way, this is Les Cocker.

Cocker: Woof.

Sheik: May choicest blossoms rain upon your swimming-pool, O Cocker of the North. You and your master bring to our tarry dunes the cooling sweetness of ten billion blades of grass.

Revie: He is a good lad, is Les. Very handy with the Magic Sponge.

All: (*gasp*) The Magic Sponge!

Sheik: Truly, my brothers, Allah has shepherded us into the presence of great wisdom. Tell us now, O Admiral of the Feet, with what name shall we dignify this unworthy team of ours?

Revie: Well, I did think Abu Dhabi County had a bit of, you know, punch to it, but Elsie prefers plain Arab Emirates United. Whatever your 'Oliness prefers. No skin off my, er, nose.

Sheik: Then it shall be Arab Emirates Wanderers United. A.E.W.U. has a powerful ring. See to it, my ministers, Hamid! A Jaycloth for our guest. He sweats as a journalist in Ramadan. And now, O Instant Replay of a Century's Highlights, what of our players, our tactics? We wait upon your wisdom.

Revie: Well, we all know it's going to be tough, Barry – er, Sheik. I haven't had much of a chance to get together with the squad, in fact I haven't seen a football pitch as yet, but I'm 100 per cent hopeful that I'll be able to set them up in a cast-iron 4-4-2 that'll make them almost impossible to beat. I'm confident we can get a result, provided we can keep the opposition starved of the ball, and drinking-water.

Sheik: These words are as sherbet to my ears, O Rare Dessert of Yorkshire. But skills, have my people skills?

Revie: Their skills, O Sheik, excite me. And that's just the men! Ha ha ha.

Sheik: Your laughter is full of stones, as a desert brook long parched. How can this be?

Revie: Well, Sheik, you 'ave to get used to takin' the knocks in this job, but you know as well as I do I've been dogged by a bad run of injuries, we've not been puttin' it together up front, and quite frankly I've been given a bit of stick for my part in it.

Sheik: A bit of *stick*? A poor reward indeed! Truly the ways of your countrymen are strange, O Herbaceous Border of Truth. 'The Prophet shall speak, and with a bit of stick they shall reward him.' Ha! You will

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Revie: £335,000 tax paid over four years, plus VAT, luncheon vouchers, firm's car, free petrol on site, TV fees to be negotiated, no press interviews without prior contract, ex-directory phone with hot line to Leeds, contracts for kit and pitch-side adverts to be passed through my agents, laundry Mondays and Thursdays. Is it a deal, beardy, or do I bugger off home and take up the 17 offers I've had from West Germany?
Sheik: O Beautiful Mover in the Midfield, let us sign without delay. You honour us with your presence. If Allah wills it, you will make us great among nations. My brothers, a toast! To the coming day when Arab Emirates Wanderers United shall be the greatest international cricket eleven in the world!
Revie: Eh?
Cocker: Shurrup, Don, it's only four years.

Wates v. Schreiber

Leo Plendello

Unreal Estate

For jaundiced observers of the legal scene, *Wates v Schreiber, Grant and others* has been among the most entertaining of recent cases. The plaintiff, Paul Wates, 29, described as a director of the family building firm and jockey, sued the executors of the late Derek Schreiber and the estate agents Strutt and Parker over the sale to him in 1973 of a large mansion, Bellasis House near Dorking, advertised by the defendants as the work of Sir Edwin Lutyens. Wates originally offered £350,000, but so chuffed was he at the prospect of inhabiting a Lutyens masterpiece that he upped this to a princely £385,000; the house was promptly withdrawn from auction and became his. However, a little social chit-chat during a local point-to-point alerted the rash young foxhunter's suspicions, and on examination of the original plans they were found to be signed not by Lutyens but by Philip Tilden, a lesser luminary of interwar domestic architecture. Hoping to get some return from his imprudent outlay, Wates sued the vendors for misrepresentation.

Unhappily the case was settled out of court on the third day. It would have been nice to sit upon Mr Justice McKenna's throne and award Wates the customary farthing, with costs going not to the greedy lawyers but to the heirs and assigns of Philip Tilden, surely the only party to have been truly injured in the affair. Although in some ways rather a soppy architect, Tilden did tend to plan his houses better than Lutyens, for which Wates may thank his lucky stars. He certainly deserved to lose every penny of £35,000, which is perhaps of no greater value to him than a couple of 'Wates homes' more or less. All he had to do was to have a look in the Surrey volume of Pevsner's *Buildings of England*, 2nd edition (1971) p.598, to find Bellasis was 'remodelled c.1920 by *Philip Tilden* for Viscountess Ridley'. Alternatively, with his kind of contacts, you might think that a minion could have been dispatched to look into the Lutyens attribution, if that alone was what made him dig so deep into his pocket.

For Strutt and Parker, who grandly 'made no admissions' about their attribution of the house, although an old assistant of Tilden's had written to them setting out the true facts, this particular sale may have been an embarrassment. Yet the whole area of attributed houses is a 'growth market', no doubt for them as for other estate agents. If Sir Nikolaus Pevsner had had 100th of one per cent on all the property transactions for which valuable information leading to a sale had been pilfered *gratis* from his admirable series, his volumes would sell at the price of a Harold Robbins, and he rather than Paul Wates might be paying over the odds for Bellasis (though one doubts if the Herr Professor Knight Bachelor's taste would stretch to a Tilden). Architectural research in fact, just like art history, can push up prices, and if the Wates case shows that it can also diminish them, the opposite trend is more in evidence.

Thirty years ago there were just a few names which could be guaranteed to give a house that extra go on the market. Inigo Jones was one, Wren another, and houses were once blithely attributed to them with scant regard for the truth. Cubitt was a third (more sensible this, as a well-built house is a better investment than a beautiful one), and Lutyens definitely a fourth. Now, under the influence of property journalists like Michael Hanson in *Country Life* (who was plugging Tilden recently), estate agents are encouraged to advertise houses as 'by' this famous architect or that. Soon, doubtless, we shall have to watch out in sales particulars for those dreaded tricks of the art auctioneers: is the £350,000 house of your choice by 'Seth Pecksniff', by 'S. Pecksniff', merely by 'Pecksniff' or (worst of all possible worlds) 'office of Pecksniff'?

Nevertheless, capitalism being capitalism and accuracy in all things a virtue, a thorough cleansing of estate agency language cannot be but welcome. As many dubious uses of the terms 'period', 'Georgian' and even '12th century' adorn the average smart wad of house particulars as there are bogus plaudits on the façades of certain West End theatres. Since the great and gullible rich like Master Wates plainly need protecting, I for one shall be happy to look into the credentials of any house for my usual commission of 5 per cent on the purchase price. Strutt and Parker, please note.

Among this week's contributors:

THOMAS M. DISCH's novels include *Camp Concentration* and *334*; *On Wings of Song* is to be published shortly.

ARTHUR HOPCRAFT is the author of *Born to Hunger* (1969).

EDWARD PYGGE was for a short time Assistant Physiotherapist at Accrington Stanley.

Television

Russell Davies

Loco

Has anybody watched *Nationwide* (BBC-1) lately? Isn't it time something was done about this unique on-screen club for self-congratulating funsters? I don't know how even *they* expected to get away with last week's scheme.

The idea was that the BBC hired an Exhibition Train (basic hire charge £5,000), painted it up in *Nationwide* colours, kitted it out as a studio, and shunted Michael Barratt around the country in it, visiting places associated with the origins and rise to fame of Michael Barratt: Bournemouth Maidenhead, Stratford-on-Avon, Leeds, Saltburn-by-the-Sea. The *Nationwide* 'team' popped up severally to remind our hero of his past deeds, and on Friday all the regional presenters banded together in Saltburn to see him off as he escaped from the programme into the outside world.

This was an anchor-man casting off at last, and the spectacle was supposed to hold our attention for five nights – though there were some sideshows of more general concern, like Friday's interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This was conducted, naturally, between Healey in the London studio and Barratt in his bloody train on the north-east coast. Once Healey had said his more than usually baffled piece, it was on with the show again; for all week there had been amateur dramatics, showbiz chit-chat stuntmen diving off roofs into giant padded sacks, etc, to break up the Barratt biography. The whole exercise ended its week's tenure in a fine and typical fit of technical clumsiness. Barratt was off-camera when he said his final goodbye; we found him finally waving out of a carriage window, no to us, but to somebody we could not see and as the sig-tune and logo closed over the programme, the train obstinately refused to move out.

There are very many reasons why a self respecting viewer should object to this sor of imposition. To start with, there's Michae Barratt. Do we like him as much as hi colleagues seem to feel we must? I certainly don't. He has always struck me as a mar whose camera-charm fails to conceal hi own fundamental conviction that he's no very charming at all. One ends up sensing a good deal more about Barratt's owr world than the one he's ostensibly discussing. But this is precisely how the programme as a whole works.

Whatever else we glean from *Nationwide* it must not be lost on us that its participant enjoy the show themselves – not its contents, you understand, but the mechanics o it: the dressing up, the technical hitches one another's company. The arrival of a friend of mine, Richard Stilgoe, in the line up has not helped it in this respect. Stilgo is a talented and funny man but the flippancy which works for him personally rub

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off easily on others who can't get away with it. Hence last Monday's *Nationwide*, first of the post-Barratt era, where almost every item was giggly, superficial, thin, and incidentally catastrophic from the technical point of view. Maybe Barratt caught the train just in time.

A. J. P. Taylor's *How Wars Begin* (BBC-1) are so satisfactorily intimate, in the style of a university supervision, that one longs to put in the odd impertinent question. But the realisation that only a phone-in system would make such a thing possible is enough to suppress the whole idea at once. *The Philpott File* (BBC-1) on pubs was still not up to Mr Philpott's highest standards; but I have a feeling he is working towards some horrendous statement on alcoholism next Monday night.

Films

John Coleman

Hi, Tom

3 Women (AA) *Curzon*
The Middle of the World (X) *Camden Plaza*
The Shaggy D.A. (U) *General release from 24 July*
Salo, or the 120 Days of Sodom *Compton Cinema Club*

Robert Altman films dangerously. His *3 Women* is his most excessive movie to date, which is saying a great deal when one considers a career that has embraced such turnips as *The James Dean Story*, *Brewster McCloud*, *Images* and *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*, such many-faceted events as *M*A*S*H*, *McCabe and Mrs Miller*, *The Long Goodbye*, *Thieves Like Us*, *California Split* and *Nashville*. Only the other week, we were mentioning him as Altman, producer, an evident influence for good on Robert Benton's *The Late Show*. He is capable of working to scripts but his instincts are exploratory: he must be the fastest draw in the West when it comes to whipping out a pencil with which to cross out first lines and let his brilliantly chosen actors and collaborators write their own. Maybe he is more an impresario than a director, old-style. Wherever the truth may lie, he is as important – with a body of work to prove it – as anyone currently engaged in cinema, bringing a generous and substantial, hedge-hopping and needle-sharp intelligence to bear on the wilderness that is civilisation as we know it. Since he is ever ready to experiment, to the degree even of having looked at some films out of Europe and being prepared to chance his exposure to such arty stuff on screen, it is not altogether surprising if his newest trip falls flat on our faces. (Nobody gave me a synopsis – as how could they? – and, like Altman and company, I am improvising.) It is his strange mingle of *Images* and Bergman's *Persona* and some kind of private love-affair with the weird, phallic, snarling and pseudo-Cretan murals and panels and swimming-pool floors supplied by one Bodhi Wind. It's an ill Wind, as it turns out.

These alluring nonsenses, which suggest mosaic art – of which, by crackey, Altman is already no mean master – figure behind the credits and throughout the film: they are there ostensibly painted by one of the three women, a pregnant nutter called Willie Hart (Janice Rule) who has little to do except look pregnant in a couple of senses and ultimately give birth to a dead child without benefit of umbilical cord. Her drinking, shooting, greying husband, Edgar (Robert Fortier), owns some urban and desert Californian property – furiously photogenic, with Chuck Rosher on camera – which is most of the movie's context: a beat-up, drive-in affair known as Dodge City and a *very* cool and crazy apartment block entitled Purple Sage. The other, opening site is a kind of rehabilitation centre for geriatrics: wrinkled old buttocks also sag behind the credits. And it is at this eerie medical complex for the old, with its healing baths and cubicles, that our twin heroines – Millie Lammoreaux (Shelley Duvall, who is reported to have composed 80 per cent of her lines) and Pinky Rose (Sissy Spacek), a fledgling nurse – first meet. At last: we have fought our way to the central relationship. Millie is a beautiful, diary-keeping, extraordinarily programmed mentor, constantly talking into space. Looking the ultimate in cool at first, and intensely admired by gawky Pinky, she is deeply frozen by everyone she meets: 'Hi, Tom', to a disappearing male back, could be her refrain.

It is really Millie's confident carapace that Altman first sets out to crack. He is on record as having found inspiration for the whole business in a dream, after which he took notes:

> Two young girls from Texas, dreaming of the good life, meet in a desert community, come to terms with the undercurrents in their lives and undergo a metamorphosis.

But, hell, they undergo change after change in the outcome. Adoring Pinky – and Miss Spacek's loony-bird intensity is well used – moves innocently in with Millie, crashes deliberately into the Purple Sage pool, goes into coma, to emerge with a nasty new persona, gobbling up Millie's sad, failed-chic life and diary like left-overs, *becoming* what Millie had pretended to be: sought-after, lounging, a sex-thing. Only, this switch in behaviour could easily have stemmed from that bash she took on the head and, as such, is pathological rather than a metaphor for anything much. Altman goes on to further shifts and reversals: it is a film that appears to have ended at least twice before it does. It is extremely funny in a fashion probably more accessible to Americans, with their vast, patchwork acreage, their readiness to drive all night to get nowhere if it promises to be more amusing than the nowhere they came from, their expansive geography. Let us repeat, for the first hour this is a comic, even satiric event of power and richness. Alas, then, for the rippling seen-through-water use of a Bodhi Wind image as if the trendily painted thing were quivering into copulation; alas, too, for a dream-sequence of Pinky's, an item of lab-work like a long, long trailer; alas for Altman trusting in the half-recalled matter of a surrealist night, however authentic and portentous it felt at the time.

Alain Tanner's *The Middle of the World* is a thoughtful original with one outstanding performance by a strong-toothed, amiably bosomed lady, Olimpia Carlisi, who plays Adriana, an immigrant Italian waitress in a Swiss station café, and a properly unsympathetic one from Philippe Léotard as Paul, a whizz engineer of low origins and high political prospects, and deserves more space than it is going to get. It is long and feels long but that is Tanner's way. Like *The Salamander* and *Return from Africa* (especially the second), this gets its inner energy from a pair of superbly selected players, rapid, almost interrupted cutting (so that scenes go away a second before one has finished with them, like encounters glimpsed from the top of a bus), a freedom with dialogue which is not Altmanesque – our own one-time John Berger worked on the script – but sharp and refreshing. As a filmic freeloader for a few years now, I would pay money to see Miss Carlisi go through her repertoire of smiles: withheld, radiant, downright giggly. The Disney stable is turning into kennels and *The Shaggy D.A.* is a mutter-schmutter with what may have sounded like a keen notion proved wrong. Pasolini's sick epilogue or epitaph has nothing going for it unless you enjoyed the book of the film, de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*; or perm any two from the following three: buggery, coprophagy, mutilation. It has nothing to communicate that one hasn't already conceived of, in one's worst moments.

Jazz

Charles Fox

Sweet Talk

Mabel Mercer *Playboy Club; until 29 July*

It's all a bit like an aquarium, especially when the Venetian blinds get left aslant. Cars flash up and down Park Lane, passers-by stop to point and gawp, the voyeurs and the viewed somehow overlapping. But that ambiguity and that detachment fit the mood of the occasion. For what Mabel Mercer is doing in the Playmate Grill (non-members *can* get in) from Mondays to Fridays until July 29 has a timeless quality. Many of the songs are old. Plenty use in-jokes and evoke social attitudes that World War II swept away. The voice is fallible, tethered to a narrow range. What redeems everything is the sense of style. Mabel Mercer belongs to the generation which made sophistication seem the most desirable of attributes.

Born, improbably enough, at Burton-on-Trent in 1900, the child of a black American father and a white English mother, Mabel Mercer sang at Bricktop's in the Rue Pigalle when it was a hangout for both

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literary expatriates and the smart set. She set up headquarters in New York immediately after the war, performing in a succession of supper-clubs, adopted as a cult figure not only by the rich who also happened to be discriminating but by singers – Sinatra, Billie Holiday, Peggy Lee – who, unlike her, were household names. What they admired was the way she handled words. Songs, for Mabel Mercer, are about situations. Even in boisterous numbers, such as *It's All Right With Me* (nobody sings Cole Porter better, as the composer admitted), the message is what matters. It's tempting but misleading to compare her with Billie Holiday, adept at turning third-rate songs into genuine emotional experiences. Mabel Mercer never sets out to dominate her material, as a jazz singer is bound to do. She chooses carefully, then interprets, respecting the composer's wishes. The result has nothing to do with nostalgia. Indeed, many of the songs she performs – Joni Mitchell's *Both Sides Now*, to pick just one – were written during the past 20 years, even if the overall commitment is to the classic American tradition.

Reviewers make too much of Mabel Mercer's habit of sometimes talking songs rather than singing them. Vocal perfection has never been her aim. Early recordings show that high notes could be wobbly, the break of register often uneasy. Not that records do her justice, anyway. Those LPs which are around (a few imports can be stumbled on in enterprising shops) are best enjoyed as reminders of the live performance. Her act is low-key – no ingratiating chatter, no clutching of the microphone. The singer sits upright in a gilt, high-backed chair, using both hands for gesturing, tilting her head at the right moment (to emphasise 'with my usual flair', for instance, in the virtuoso rendering of *Send In The Clowns*), perpetually balancing the serious and the trivial, sounding rueful but never complaining, always mindful that life is just as likely to be ludicrous as tragic.

Weekend Competition

No 2473 **Set by Tim Hopkins**

WIMPEY, as everyone knows, stands for We Import More Paddies Every Year. Can you explain how other large organisations got their names? By 5 August.

Result of No 2470
Set by M. V. Gracechurch

Would you buy a second-hand car from this man? We asked competitors to imagine the famous on the forecourt.

Report **by The Lemon Kid**

I hereby put the lemon on all hand-written entries. Fat Jeff may not mind straining his piggy eyes to decipher the smudgy biro efforts which come in brown envelopes by second-class post; but when the Kid is judging, extra marks are always given for presentation. You won't get any cash from me if you haven't got a typewriter. Sharpless and Peterson were *exceptionally* neat this week; Parrott just about scraped in – hasn't he a best friend who can tell him about Tippex? So only six pounds to him for his Magnus Pyke; ditto for Revie and Whitehouse; but a whole extra pound for Amin and Larkin.

I'm telling you, dis car for you, man. You buy dis car, you keep out ob trouble. Low mileage. One owner. On dat last I gib you my personal guarantee. Dem little round dents? Dey don't mean nudding, man. Shows she's bullet proof, dat's all. Lick ob paint's all she need. Fine safe car, dis. Dat's right; rattle dem security locks much as you please. Into dis car nobody gets without he knows de combinations. No one going to sneak into dis car slice your balls off. Oh, hullo dere, Sergeant M'Fuzu. Looks to me you got a nice sharp *panga* in your belt dere. Let's hab a feel of it. Boy! Like I thought, sharp like a razor. Howzat? Figure you'll take her? For cash? Dat's great, man, just great. Hand ober der down payment to de Finance Minister. De rest's mine.

PETER PETERSON

It's an absolutely splendid car in absolutely magnificent condition. A scientific miracle, you might say. Why, look at these doors, how easily they open, and you'll only need a couple of my new hinges to get it closed again. Or take this shatter-proof windscreen which I will just tap with this sledge-hammer, and well, it's easily replaced, and you won't meet many silly fools around who will tap your windscreen with sledge-hammers, will you? And, of course, I have adapted the engine to run off chicken shit, which is, of course, not only cheaper but much better, environmentally speaking. No horrid diesel fumes. The stuff on the back seat? Well, of course, you have to keep the chickens somewhere, and there aren't many garages yet that sell the stuff, and if you should run out of fuel anywhere . . .

E. O. PARROTT

A spotless car, sir. The body clean and pure inside and out. No filth. One gets enough filth on television and radio. Nothing but filth, FILTH! FILTH! . . . oh . . . er . . . excuse me . . . where was I? Ah yes. Gear lever? Hidden under the steering wheel. Young people shouldn't be exposed to that suggestive shaft sticking up their legs, with the disgusting knob at the end. This is a *family* car. Show you the room in the back? Look here! Are you suggesting . . . Oh! Sorry! . . . the back *seat* . . . well, quite adequate for unmarried folk choosing to indulge in mixed motoring. Note the coooooool seats. Keeping one's seat cool's *most* important, isn't it? Yes, the interior light's permanently on. As a Christian I like to know what's happening between passengers, don't you? Square dashboard dials? Obviously, Who wants to see two great round things flashing away . . .

GERRY HAMILL

Well, if a car stands or falls by its wheels then this model won't let you down. They're magnificent runners – and I'm proud of them. Note the way they go round and round in predictable circles. As you can see, we've got two up front, which gives us a spare at the back in case of emergencies – all of which adds to the safety-first image. You'll find all the power at the back too, because over the years I've avoided models with drive at the front. If you'd care to look at the engine now, you'll notice the worn-out dynamo and distributor – which may well account for the lack of vital spark, and the poor timing. I'm doing my best to get replacements, but at the moment there's a national shortage of quality spares. So all in all it's a pretty average, low-performance model, and with a bit of luck it should coast along for a couple of years or so.

T. HOPE

I'm not a man to muck about,
And you're a decent sort of chap,
So I won't talk a load of crap:
This old jalopy's up the spout.

The engine runs by fits and starts,
You would do better with a bike,
The body, well – it's had it – like
A superannuated tart's.

If you decide to have a bash
You may end up in kingdom come;
You think I've got a nerve, then, chum?
I need the cash, the cash, the cash.

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

Tony Miles

Chess

No 43 **Nigel Short**

A word about the Russians before young Nigel. The semi-finals of the candidates matches are now under way. Spassky (USSR) and Portisch (Hungary) have drawn their first two games, but in the other match Korchnoy (Stateless) leads Polugaevsky (USSR) 2-0 and also has the advantage in the adjourned third game! It appears that the pressure of trying to eliminate the 'traitor' Korchnoy is proving too much for the Russian's notoriously shaky nerves. I think it most unlikely that he will recover from such a start, and the match may well be over very quickly.

Nearer home Nigel Short has broken a few more records by qualifying for the final stages of this year's British Championship. At 12 he is not only the youngest player to reach this stage in the British Championship but also, it seems, the youngest player to qualify for any national final, thus beating Capablanca's 75-year-old record. Possibly this is a little misleading since the British final is a Swiss-system event with 30 plus players whereas others, for example in the USA, are smaller all-play-alls

However he has also been faring well in weekend events recently, winning at Rochdale with 6/6 and tying for second place at Charlton with 5/6 – exactly the same result, it hurts me to recall, as I achieved there only two years ago.

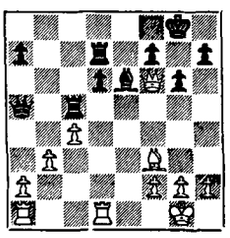
In doing so he emphatically beat the Australian board 2 Max Fuller:

White: N. Short **Black: M. L. Fuller**

1. P-K4, P-QB4; 2. N-KB3, N-QB3; 3. B-N5, Q-N3, 4. B x N, Q x B (4 . . . NP x B is safer); 5. 0-0, P-KN3; 6. N-B3, B-N2; 7. P-Q4, P-Q3; 8. P x P, P x P (8 . . . Q x BP gives better chances of survival), 9. B-B4, B x N; 10. P x B, Q x P (pawn-snatching is rarely a good idea when behind in development Black should try to crawl out with . . . NB3); 11 Q-B1, B-B4; 12. R-K1, Q-R5 (if 12 . . . Q x P; 13. Q-R3 is strong); 13. Q-K3, Q-B3; 14. N-K5, Q-B1, 15. N-B4, B-K3; 16. Q-K5, N-B3; 17. N-Q6ch, P x N, 18. Q x N, R-KN1; 19. B x P, Q-Q2; 20. QR-Q1, Resigns.

Problem 43

White to play. How should the game go? Entries to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than Wednesday 3 August.



Solution to Problem 41

1. B-Q6! resigns. If 1 . . . R x B; 2. Q-N8ch or if 1 . . . N x B; 2. Q x Qch.

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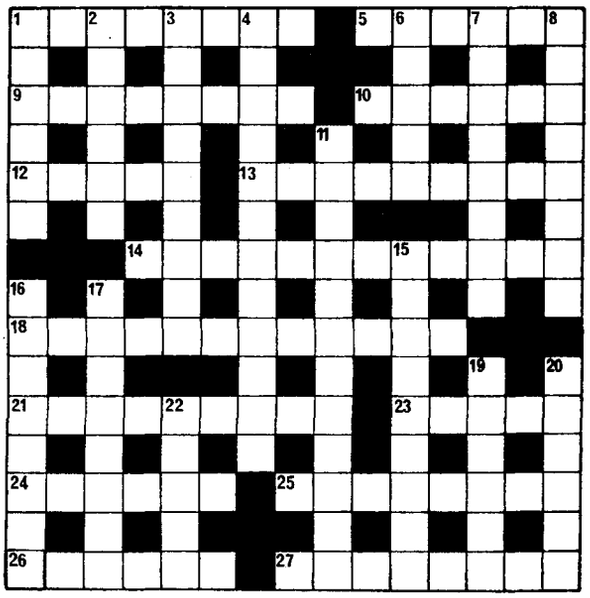
Weekend Crossword 1225

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1225, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 2 August.



ACROSS

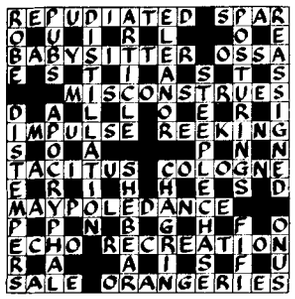
1. Dell under the authorship of a broadcaster (8).
5. Wodehouse needs varied help by morning (6).
9. Accompanying whether I go to pieces (8).
10. Healthier worker (6).
12. Peculiar expression of one unperceptive about nothing (5).
13. What issues make me return with a lot of people (9).
14. The blustering fellow has a second to clean the shield (12).
18. Relates point wrongly and inserts wrong word (12).
21. Not being a fully fledged craftsman, may make the centre dip (9).
23. 'I spy a —— in drinking' (Scott) (5).
24. Country in a northerly direction (6).
25. It is sweet having a short time with girls (8).
26. Young men caught by dates being changed (6).
27. Feelers put out before holding a girl back (8).

DOWN

1. Flower in which the disease had returned (6).
2. Saint who has a drink without one (6).
3. Green cutter (9).
4. It is sweet to give the goat a drink (12).
6. Heath makes one care madly (5).
7. A place in the country, had I felt in need of a change (8).
8. Marries an indefinite number dressed up as sailors (8).
11. Jordan Bay and possibly an elderly couple (5, 3, 4).
15. To stop one's spouse constitutes a victory (9).
16. Man's fear of a foreign country (8).
17. King who makes a girl blush (8).
19. If he lost his head, a religious man would turn to crime (6).
20. The tenant is in the stables seeing to the horses (6).
22. Area where vehicle comes up in a race (5).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1223


REPUDIATED SPAR
O U I R L O E
BABYSITTER OSSA
E S T I A S T S
MISCONSTRUES
D A L L O E R I
IMPULSE REEKING
S O A P N N
TACITUS COLOGNE
E R I H E S D
MAYPOLEDANCE
P P N B G H F O
ECHO RECREATION
R A A I S F U
SALE ORANGERIES

Prizewinners to No 1223

Madeleine Graham (Harlow)
John Brasier (N. Petherton)
Miss Dinshaw (St Brelade's Bay)

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Essentials for the job are experience of print production, a commitment to Trade Unionism and an interest in trade union education.

Salary in the £3,581-£4,702 range. Superannuation scheme. Union membership necessary within first month.

For application form and further details, please write to:

General Secretary, TUC, Congress House, Gt Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS.

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INTER-ACTION, a community arts trust based in Kentish Town needs video worker for its community media team. Experience with community and group work and video desirable; driving licence and ability to work on own initiative essential. Further details: Paul Brookes, Inter-Action, 15 Wilkin Street, London NW5 3PE.

PERSONAL SECRETARY required for Director of national countryside conservation organisation, located Victoria. Salary £3,000 p.a. negotiable + LVs. Holiday arrangements respected. Experience and initiative required. Small busy office. Telephone (01-235 9481) or write: Christopher Hall, Council for the Protection of Rural England, 4 Hobart Place, London SW1W 0HY.

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Join the CWS and you will be joining a profitable and diverse organisation – one of the largest of its kind in Europe – comprising a complex range of commercial and industrial concerns. We are in manufacturing, wholesaling, retailing, farming, travel and a lot more besides, with a total staff of 30,000. The CWS has 200 different agreements with no less than 40 different trade unions, reflecting the size and diversity of the organisation.

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The Senior post covers every aspect of industrial relations. You will interpret and contribute to the continuing development of the Society's Industrial Relations policies; act in an advisory capacity to line management and negotiate with trade unions at national level.

A considerable knowledge of the industrial scene and relevant legislation, plus a considerable experience in industrial relations are essential qualifications. Obviously we should like to find an experienced National Level Negotiator, but we feel this opening could well be the right step for someone with good local level industrial relations experience in a major organisation.

The second position offers the opportunity for a younger person who has nevertheless gained some practical I.R. experience to develop skills in a stimulating and interesting environment offering both major and local negotiations over a broad spectrum of industries.

The salaries offered are attractive and the general conditions of employment are good but the greatest appeal will probably be the scope offered for broadening your industrial relations experience in a multi-faceted organisation.

Please write, giving brief details of experience and present salary and stating the job in which you are interested, to:

W. G. Davidson, Industrial Relations Manager, CWS Limited, PO Box 53, New Century House, Manchester, M60 4ES.

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Head of Information

Following the decision of Barney Keelan to retire in the autumn, the Authority invites applications for the forthcoming vacancy of Head of Information. The post is based in London and is open to men and women. It is being advertised both within and outside the Authority.

The Head of Information reports to the Director General of the Authority. The Information Division, which the postholder will be in charge of and have budgetary responsibility for, contains specialist staff in press, public relations and publications; it also includes the IBA Broadcasting Gallery and the Library.

The successful candidate will not only possess high competence in dealing with the normal 'information' function of telling the public, through the written and spoken word, about the Authority's activities. He or she must also be able to explain to people at all levels – for example to Members of Parliament and interest groups as well as to ordinary viewers and listeners – the background to the Authority's thinking on broad policy questions. The Authority will also expect that the person appointed will be particularly qualified by experience and aptitude to maintain and develop arrangements for contact with the public through meetings of varying kinds throughout the country.

'Information' is to be seen in this post not merely as a one-way process where people outside are told what the Authority is doing and thinking; it also includes the essential function of making the Authority itself aware of public attitudes to its services as represented, for example, by what is written in the Press and elsewhere and by what is said at public meetings.

Applicants should be able to demonstrate that they have relevant experience and qualifications, preferably in broadcasting or journalism, and that they also have the intellectual capacity to give to the Authority and its senior staff authoritative advice, based upon a capacity to identify the essentials of policy and to assess what is required in terms of the information function. The Authority will be as much interested in applicants' proved capacity in this latter policy area as in specific experience in the press and public relations field.

This is one of the senior posts in the Authority and the salary will be not less than £12,500.

IBA INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING AUTHORITY

A full job description is available on request from Anthony Pragnell, Deputy Director General, IBA, 70 Brompton Road, London, SW3 1EY to whom applications should be sent by 15th August 1977.

The Association of Broadcasting and Allied Staffs

wishes to appoint

an

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Applications are invited from candidates with experience as full time Trade Union officials. The successful candidate will be responsible for servicing internal committees and negotiating with employers.

The salary is £5,702 per annum.

Written applications to be submitted by 22 August 1977 to:

The General Secretary,
The Association of Broadcasting and Allied Staffs,
King's Court, 2-16, Goodge Street, London W1P 2AE.

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Application forms from Mrs Helen Young, Office Manager, CPSA, 215 Balham High Road, London, SW17 7BQ. 01-672 1299. Closing date for receipt of completed application forms 10 August 1977.

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MATURE MALE, 25, painter/teacher, urgently requires 2 rooms/1 large room, preferably self-contained, but flexible as regards sharing, in SW London area. Max. rent £18 per week. Phone Chris 01-444 9786 day & after 8.30 p.m. or 722 4762, 5-8 p.m. Mon.-Sat.

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